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THE SISTERS:

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



VOL. II.

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THE SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

I'll beg one boon
And then be gone and trouble you no more.
Shall I obtain it ?

Shakspeare.

FELICIA had been accustomed when Evanmore escorted Rosalind to any scene of amusement, to await their return ; and in defiance of his secret fear that she would rather he had not been her companion, Evanmore used to feel the evening's entertainment increased, and perpetuated, by communicating to her every little incident that had occurred. Never had he returned from any public place with half so much to reveal. Yet something within him seemed to whisper, as he drove home from Lady Clarinda Lovelace's, he could not attempt

to relate what had passed at the fairy residence he had left.

In defiance of his anxious wish, on this occasion, to banish her from his mind, her melancholy figure haunted him through the evening; and though the partner of the queen of the night, as Rosalind had really proved, once or twice he half wished he had not been there to share her glories. When the carriage stopped, his heart fluttered, from an indistinct apprehension that she would not meet him with her customary kindness. He sprung up the stairs, and eagerly threw open the drawing-room door; but she was not there.—It was the first time she had not remained to welcome his return, and he felt instantaneously that involuntary chill, which, however it may be laughed at as superstitious, we sometimes experience on the eve of misfortune. The chair she had occupied at their parting, remained in its former position; and he was standing, his eyes instinctively bent upon it, when Rosalind perceived the note Felicia had ordered to be left for him lying on the table.

“Evanmore, a *billet-doux* for you!” she said, holding it up. He hastily seized it, and

tore it open. "Ah!" she laughingly cried, watching the uneasiness that stole over his face, "it is as I suspected. You must eat humble pie for this to-morrow, young man."

Evanmore blushed. To be laughed at was poison to his soul, and after attempting to retaliate upon her some part of her own conduct during the evening, he carelessly put it into his pocket, and wished her good night, with a smile of gaiety, that ill agreed with his real feelings.

He returned to his lodgings with far less hilarity than he had left them. He saw from the tenor of Felicia's note, she was deeply hurt; and he had little doubt the interview she requested was, to expostulate with him on the unkindness of his conduct, or the laxity, as she might esteem it, of his principles. He was, however, too weary to pursue these unpleasant ruminations very long, and, assured from Felicia's attachment he should not have much to apprehend, he dropped asleep. From that long deep slumber, which is often the result of excessive fatigue, he awoke with an excruciating head-ache. Every object seemed to swim before his eyes; and languidly looking at his

watch, as he recollected his appointment with Felicia, he saw it was already two hours past the period she had fixed. At first he was hurt at this circumstance, but he had never felt more inclined to indulge in bed; and as, with a reluctant yawn, he endeavoured to rise, he began to question Felicia's right to call him to any severe account for partaking of an amusement which he deemed perfectly innocent. "It was sufficient that she was allowed to indulge her own prejudices without restraint; he had not thought of being really angry with her for refusing to accept Lady Clarinda's invitation; she, therefore, ought not to resent his having gratified his wishes by going." Still he was neither quite satisfied with his own arguments, nor quite so much assured their interview would terminate pleasantly, as when he retired to rest. He called to remembrance the many hints she had given him of her wish, that he should spend that evening with her; the many allusions she had made to Lady Clarinda's character, and the peculiar dislike she had expressed to a masquerade, considered as an amusement. With these recollections mingled the artful insinuations Lady Wyedale had so

often thrown out, relative to her misplaced zeal in the cause of religion. And the laugh with which Rosalind had witnessed any little act of supposed self-denial, or scrupulous regard to decorum, rung in his ear.

As he pursued these reminiscences, Evanmore grew unconsciously out of temper. He had, indeed, a secret conviction on his own mind, in defiance of these endeavours to convince himself he was right, that he was not altogether without blame; and, as that is a sensation which seldom fails to increase previous irritation, Evanmore at length worked himself up to a state bordering as much on ill-humour, as a sensible, amiable man can feel, when he knows he has received no real provocation.

As he approached Russel-square, the remembrance of Rosalind's raillery did not tend to soothe him into a more complacent state of mind; and when, as he passed up the grand stair-case, he caught a view of her head, peeping through an adjacent door, with a smile of indescribable fun, he felt half-tempted to refuse the explanation Felicia demanded. Before, however, he could determine on this line of

conduct, she withdrew her head with an expressive shake of roguish pity, and he found himself in the library. Felicia was already there, and scarcely knowing what to do, he stammered out something like an apology for his delay; but he did not state, that it arose from indisposition, and his cheek, flushed by shame, wore no trace of the pain that racked his head.

Felicia heard him in silence. His remissness naturally struck her as a further instance of indifference to her feelings, and in his distant air and reserved manner, she read so much alienation, that wounded pride giving additional energy to her mind, she entered at once, with more firmness than she had previously believed possible, upon the motive for her request to see him alone. Evanmore listened in astonishment too great to be concealed. He had come expecting remonstrance, tears, and reproaches—a display of feminine violence, in short, mingled with feminine tenderness; and he had prepared himself for the attack in the shape he expected it. But he was wholly unqualified to reply to arguments, urged with the mild, yet firm dignity of conscious truth, or

realize to himself the probability of a separation from a woman he had so long considered as a wife. It was his pride to believe, that she adored him; and he had been so accustomed to hear himself represented as a young man of even exemplary morals, that resentment mingled with the uneasiness he felt at her supposed alienation.

“These are strange charges, Miss Leycester,” said he coldly, when she finished that painful duty she had so long been trying to acquire fortitude to perform, “and utterly unapprehensive of the possibility of your either advancing or acting upon them, I can only generally say, I consider your conduct as evincing a degree of injustice and personal unkindness, which you could not have manifested, had your own heart and principles remained the same as at Leominster. I may, indeed, have said, when your continual recurrence to religious topics induced me to fear such might be the result of that overstrained apprehension of doing wrong, which I daily witnessed, I trusted you would never be an enthusiast; and that I had reason to fear the growth of such sentiments, is too well established by your coolly telling me, that

our sentiments are now so opposite, you cannot conscientiously fulfil an engagement, voluntarily entered into, nearly two years ago, and sanctioned by the approbation of her you consider as a sainted parent."

"I am not aware that I have been in the habit of making continual allusions to religious topics, unless I may have been led to do so lately from a suspicion that your opinions were undergoing a great and unhappy change, and a remote, but idle hope, that my sentiments might influence yours. And even if I did sometimes direct your attention to such points, is it wrong to allude to the doctrines and duties of religion in the social conversation of the nearest and dearest relatives or friends? May every subject, but the one essential to our happiness, both in this and future ages, be freely discussed? I would not wish to make the glorious truths of Christianity a common, indifferent topic; but surely the sublime momentous subject might be introduced without exciting disgust and astonishment! That our sentiments on these points have undergone such a variation, that I fear I can no longer permit myself to unite my fate to yours, is most

true; but in yours, Evanmore, has the change been effected. My aunt did indeed sanction our attachment, but it was from a conviction that you thought as we thought on these most important subjects; and, you know, you told me, at Brighton, you esteemed her unnecessarily strict in the discharge of her duty."

There are few things more annoying in controversy, than to find the ground on which we fancied we had built a firm argument, recede from our feet; or any thing more mortifying, than to have our own contrary opinions at a former period judiciously turned against us by our antagonist. Evanmore had relied on the weight he derived from Mrs. Beauclerc's good opinion; and unable to confute or qualify away what he now perfectly remembered to have said, he replied with considerable bitterness, that he still maintained the same opinion.

"Am I then to be esteemed an enthusiast for saying, that he to whose guidance I intrust not only my present but future happiness, must be influenced by principles that will render him the safe guardian of so sacred a deposit? You ought to regulate my conduct, strengthen my faith, guide my footsteps! And, oh! Evan-

more, should I not also be deprived, by an union with one whose feelings were at variance with mine, of that surest cement of faithful friendship, and domestic love, unbounded confidence? Could I communicate the hopes, the fears, the weaknesses, the joys experienced by every anxious member of Christianity, to one who not only could be no participator in my feelings, but who despised them? What Egyptian darkness must environ, what sickening solitariness must encompass, that heart which cannot repose on the bosom of a husband? The hoarded secret treasured in grief, would swell to anguish, and the desolate spirit sink into utter despair."

"Dearest Felicia, we must not carry this little misunderstanding too far," said Evanmore, as feelings of resentment gradually gave way to reviving tenderness, "We must not thus destroy an affection begun in childhood, and confirmed in youth."

"Destroy it!" said she, tears rushing into her eyes. "Oh! Evanmore you know not what it has cost me thus to address you: and if on cool reflection; if on a serious re-consideration of those precepts by which you are

guided, you can lay your hand on your heart, and say, your opinions have undergone no material revolution since you left Dorsetshire, we may yet again—" her voice faltered. " But if, after dispassionate thought, and well considering all I have said, you cannot resolve to relinquish your present pursuits, I must persevere,—my peace, my conscience is involved. We are probationers; and aware of the vanity and shortness of life, shall we risk the happiness of eternity, to partake, at best, of doubtful pleasures? No, I cannot, with such a prize in view, hazard the prospect of immortality." " Felicia, I will not be disingenuous or dishonourable enough to affect sentiments foreign to my real ones. I certainly do still esteem your aunt unnecessarily rigid in the performance of the duties of life, and I undoubtedly can never be made to see the iniquity of a ball or a play, or that there is any sin in freely enjoying the blessings by which we are surrounded. But I love you dearly as ever; and if you will not interfere with my pursuits, I will not only never urge you to join in them, but respect even those scruples by which I am uninfluenced." He looked anxiously at her, hastily advanced to-

wards her, and fondly took her hand, as he seated himself near her.

“Evanmore!” said Felicia, withdrawing her hand with the energy of one who feels a sense of injury and injustice. “When have I said I saw any iniquity in a ball or a play? Have I not accompanied you to each? And have I not frequently declared it was the abuse, not use, of public amusements which I deprecated? The justice of my dislike to the avidity with which you have resorted to such scenes is too well proved by their having alienated your mind from me. Day after day, night after night, have I (united to you by one of the nearest and dearest of ties) been left alone and dejected, while you were the companion of my sister, or some other whose principles I had too much reason to fear might undermine yours. Gradually I have perceived your estrangement from all that we once mutually prized and esteemed. Even now, what is the offer you have made me—what is the reparation I am to receive for the unnumbered slights I have personally endured—what is the pledge of your sincerity, where to be insincere is fatal—what is the proof that your attachment is strong enough

to brave those trials to which it must be exposed during a connexion which can terminate only with our existence—that you will not interfere with my absurd scruples (for such is the construction I cannot but place on your words), if I will permit you to continue the same course which has already cost me so much pain—already proved so dangerous to our peace?—No, Evanmore, these are not terms to which either my pride, or my love, or my duty, will permit me to accede!”

Evanmore remained silent a moment. What would Rosalind think—what would the world think—should he comply, flitted through his fancy. “Come, let us forget the past,” he at length cried, as his eye glanced on Felicia’s agitated face, and he felt his confidence in her attachment revive. “Come, let us forget the past, and like all other lovers’ quarrels, let this be the renewal of affection between us.”

Felicia mournfully waved her head.

“Are we then to part for ever?” said he, in a tone of tender reproach.

“I have, alas! no option. It is vain again to repeat what I have already so often declared, that I dare not now make you the arbiter of

my fate, the guide of my conduct—cannot consent to continue an engagement which shall even authorize one on whom I solely depend for happiness, to find his where I am not. No, you must seek some other less fastidious; and yet—oh no! rather attach yourself to one more capable, far than I, of strengthening your principles, directing your steps.”

“Be it so!” he cried, resentment lighting up every feature. “And while you derive happiness from thinking you had some plea for separating from me, let me not be without consolation in reflecting, that I have escaped a woman whose heart is not sufficiently warm to appreciate the tenderness of mine; whose scruples and doubts might have poisoned the most harmless enjoyments of our nature, and converted my home into a scene of idle disquisition, and polemical debate.” “Evanmore!” said Felicia, viewing him with melancholy astonishment, “all is now indeed over between us; be not, however, deceived. My aunt, in her last moments, entreated me to let no earthly love engross the best affections of my soul, and I will obey her, though it cost me, even you. What I have, what I shall suffer, can be known

only to myself; for while I have little reason to hope that I possess sufficient influence over your mind to effect the slightest alteration in your sentiments, I dread to leave you in them. Yet let the consideration, that my advice is disinterested as it is sincere, have some weight with you. Scorn not the last fond entreaty of one who would have sacrificed for you every thing but this; and allow me to implore, you will review in the privacy of your own home those principles you profess. To remember that you are an accountable being, created for immortality. And oh! do not be deluded—happiness, honour, and respectability, will never be the inmates of your mansion, unless you seek one whose powers of persuasion shall be stronger than mine; whose firmness and piety may rescue you from the attractions of the world, from the waves of infidelity”—she spoke through rushing tears—“that you may taste the only pure pleasures man is capable of enjoying—that we may yet meet again!” She clasped her hands to her face, and exclaiming in a hurried voice, “Evanmore! God, God bless you!” rushed from the room.

CHAPTER II.

But they who have lov'd the fondest, the purest,
Too often have wept o'er the dream they believ'd ;
And the heart that has slumber'd in friendship securest,
Is happy indeed if 'twas never deceiv'd.

Moore.

SUCH was the result of Felicia's explanation with Evanmore ; and those only who have felt what it was to have the cup of happiness dashed from their lips, at the moment they were preparing to taste it : those only who have felt what it was to lose the object in whom had centred their fondest affections : those only who have endured the anguish which arises from a conviction, that they have ceased to inspire sentiments of attachment in that bosom which once panted only for them, can appreciate the agony of Felicia's heart, as she rushed from the presence of Evanmore, convinced, that though he might not still wish to

separate from her, she had no longer the slightest hope he would ever become her's, or reason to believe she possessed sufficient power to induce him to meet her wishes. After a few hours of perturbed sleep, she had awoke, and shuddered to think it was the dawn of that day which might separate her from Evanmore. The remembrance of the innocent pleasures of their early youth, their long intimacy, the close and dear connection that had subsisted between them nearly two years, augmented the anguish she endured. She passed the weary hours in revolving her intended arguments, and anticipating the impression they might make. Her heart throbbed as the dreaded, yet wished-for, moment arrived, and the instant that sealed their separation was received as the death-blow to her future happiness: nor were Evanmore's own sensations much less acute. For many minutes after Felicia disappeared, he continued to gaze on the door which had shut her from his view. Was it possible? had Felicia really resigned him? could an engagement, which once promised to be the harbinger of a life of love and happiness, be indeed dissolved for ever? He

could not realize the painful truth to his recoiling mind; and pressing his hands on his throbbing temples, he tried to recall his scattered senses. A foot, which he fancied to be Rosalind's, roused his dormant faculties; and springing up, he darted out of the library. At such a moment Rosalind's *badinage* would have driven him to distraction; and rushing down the stairs, he soon reached the hall. His hand was on the lock, when Jenny made her appearance from an adjoining breakfast-parlour. She was carrying some flowers to replenish the jars, with which Felicia, he knew, delighted to adorn her apartment. She smiled, and, as she passed him, wished him good morning, in a tone that announced she was unacquainted with the dreadful termination of his interview with her beloved mistress. Evanmore felt suddenly affected. Her meeting him struck him as singular and ominous. He had already parted for ever with Felicia; and stopping, he said in a low voice, "Jenny, I wish you farewell—God bless you—here is something to remind you of me. I know I need not bid you be faithful to ————" he could not say Felicia. Jenny turned very pale. "I see you

are surprised, but I am going to leave London. You will soon learn that I shall never be your master:" he hastily turned from her, and attempted to open the door.

"Oh, Sir!" she cried, with an emotion that distanced all ceremony, grasping his arm as she spoke, "do not—do not say so! Oh, Sir! I never thought it would have come to this. Oh, my poor Lady! Take back your money, Sir," and she tossed it into his hand. "Jenny," said he, in a faltering voice, "I have not injured your mistress. She has refused to continue her engagement."

"Oh, but, Sir, consider," tears flowed over her face, "consider, Sir, my Lady's aggravations!" "Tell her I love her dearly as ever," said he; "and as a proof of my sincerity, that I shall comply with one part of her entreaty, by leaving London to-night." He threw the note he had offered her on the floor, and exclaiming, "farewell," flung out of the house. With hurried steps he reached his lodgings, gave his servant orders to prepare for their immediate departure, and in the bustle of his arrangements, tried to bury the remembrance of

this first bitter disappointment he had ever sustained.

Evanmore was the idolized son of a widow, who, considering him the only pledge of her union with an amiable man, and the sole survivor of a numerous groupe of sickly children, saw in his native sweetness of temper, not the promise, but fruition of every virtue; and who would have thought it equally cruel, and equally unnecessary, to banish him from his paternal roof to acquire under any other those habits of patient perseverance and firm continuance in that path of virtue to which his natural inclination led him. Grateful for her attention to him during a long illness, and assured from her doating attachment to her child, she would never abuse the trust reposed in her, Mr. Evanmore left her the sole guardian of his son. Alas! he was not aware, that this testimony of a husband's regard should never be bequeathed but to one capable of discharging its solemn duties. Mrs. Evanmore indeed loved him, but it was with an excess that rendered her blind to his faults. She wished him all that was good, and her own conduct did not contradict the vague, indefinite, advice she now

and then indirectly, as it seemed, gave him, to be virtuous: for she was quiet, sweet-tempered, and when her desire after goodness did not clash with her wish to acquiesce in the opinions of society, inclined to be what is called "*serious*." But she wanted the calm inflexible disposition and steady rectitude which, tempered by the winning softness of the female character, is so peculiarly calculated to lead the mind of youth to settled habits of virtue. She lived as much as she possibly could in conformity to the Scriptures and the world, and every effort of her mind was exerted to unite the two contrary services of God and Mammon. She indulged in every pleasure not absolutely criminal without remorse: went to church on fair Sundays, and read her Bible on wet ones; but her studies were directed rather with a view to ascertain how far she might *safely* dispense with its obligations, than *cheerfully* comply with its requisitions. She had a numerous host of elevated acquaintance, and to rank in their estimation as a religious woman was not more the object of her ambition, than to be considered by them a methodist, was her unceasing terror.

Unwilling to deprive herself of the society of her son, on the death of his father, she immediately removed him from the residence of a clergyman, with whom he had spent the first few years devoted to education; and after procuring for him the attendance of a neighbouring gentleman, whose only duty it was, to instruct him in Latin and Greek, for some hours daily, felt satisfied she had done every thing that wisdom could advise, or attachment suggest, to promote the well-being and happiness of her child. Her maternal tenderness was the theme of much conversation and applause among her friends; and Evanmore, grateful for her kindness, and pleased with his change of situation, soon learnt to esteem her not only as the best, but most sensible of parents. The dangerous passage, therefore, from infancy to age, spent under the superintendence of such a guide, beheld him at its close, an affectionate son, a kind friend, an easy master, and an amiable man. But the faults of an injudicious education had aggravated the weak points of his character; and the natural sweetness and indolence of his youth, was succeeded by a manhood devoid of the least spark of firm de-

cision ; control over his own feelings ; mental strength to defend what his better judgment whispered was right ; or fortitude of mind sufficient to withstand the sneer of those he even despised. But these were failings not likely to be perceived in the calm tranquillity of a country residence. There his attachment to his mother, his complying temper, generous disposition, and regular habits, were the subject of universal admiration ; and Felicia, delighted with a character so seemingly in unison with her own, implicitly believed this congeniality to be produced by the same principles as those by which she was actuated. She knew not, that the feeble barrier which his mother had opposed to the influx of the passions, was not the sincere desire of pleasing his Creator, but fear of incurring His wrath, mingled with a yet greater apprehension of exciting the ridicule and disapprobation of his fellow mortals ; or she would, young as she was, have felt no astonishment on perceiving that it was too weak to resist the temptations of active life. She was not aware, that when Evanmore seemed to coincide with Mrs. Beauclerc and herself on all those essential subjects where

they now disagreed, his opinion was more the result of natural politeness to the one and love for the other, than any real conviction that they were founded in truth: not that Evanmore intended to deceive either. Mrs. Beauclerc stood so high in the country, he would have deemed it almost presumption to question any of her decisions, and he was so much accustomed to hear Felicia represented as a lovely, pleasing, superior young woman, that, independently of his personal attachment, he believed she could not err; and taught to depend not on his own judgment, but that of others, while at Leominster he felt inclined to follow, without either hesitation or investigation, the path they pointed out. It is, indeed, scarcely possible for the mind to contemplate that of a beloved object without imperceptibly imbibing a something of its colouring, unconsciously contracting similar ideas and dispositions. When, however, the scene changed, and he found that Felicia and her aunt were mutually regarded as enthusiasts and persons unacquainted with the customs and sentiments of fashionable life, he began to waver. He was like the camelion, whose tints are varied by

those of each changing object, and he soon found himself perpetually vibrating between an innate propensity to rectitude, and a slavish fear of being deemed a bigot, should he pursue the secret bias of his own heart. He still considered Felicia with the most undivided attachment; but his mother's fears of singularity, united to a disinclination to excite notoriety, rendered him almost afraid Felicia might carry her country prejudices too far. His mother, to whom he naturally stated this revolution in his sentiments, did not contribute to allay his alarms.

Mrs. Evanmore had been a little hurt at the disposition of Mrs. Beauclerc's fortune; and a little more at Rosalind's retaining, what she believed, could be no real object to her. She had also hopes, that Felicia's residence with Lady Wyedale would tend to awaken her interest in that quarter; and had, therefore, learnt, with considerable mortification, her Ladyship's unkindness, and the small probability there existed of her inheriting any thing from her. These feelings were increased by the idea, that Lady Wyedale's antipathy to her future daughter-in-law, arose from the unna-

tural strictness of her religious opinions; and, unwilling to sacrifice so great a stake to punctilios, she strenuously advised Evanmore to conciliate her Ladyship's favour, by agreeing with her on those points which she conceived were the source of her Ladyship's dislike. "No one," she declared, "could be more zealous in the cause of religion than herself; but even she thought, where people agreed in essentials, minor considerations ought to be sacrificed, that peace and happiness might be preserved in families. Nobody could entertain a more profound respect for Mrs. Beauclerc than she did; but unquestionably many most excellent and superior persons had thought her a little too rigid; and she hoped Miss Leycester's natural good sense would enable her to see, that it was impossible to act in a very genteel circle exactly the same as she had done in a retired village like Leominster, and that her native modesty would shrink from pursuing a line of conduct that must, ere long, expose her to the observation and ridicule of her acquaintance."

Evanmore was too generous to be inclined to pay Lady Wyedale attentions, merely from the

hope of securing a legacy at her death ; and too much in love, to care whether Felicia brought him two or twenty thousand pounds ; but these remarks confirming his fears relative to her, and sanctioning his own desire to partake of amusements, from which he derived so much pleasure, he gradually learnt, under the bewitching sorcery of Rosalind, to think her a visionary, and to pursue his own inclinations without regard to her evident dissatisfaction.

When dejected and fatigued by the haste with which he left London, he suddenly entered the room where his mother was sitting, she felt a degree of alarm, which was little abated by learning that the advice she had given him, had terminated in the dissolution of his engagement with Felicia. But she was too easy in disposition, and had too high an opinion of her son, long to remain under the influence of disappointment. She had long thought Felicia by no means an advantageous connection for him in point of fortune, and when she contemplated his fine person and graceful manners, improved by the high polish of the first society, with a mother's fond par-

tiality, she entertained no doubt he would marry much better.

“Don’t look so melancholy, dear Henry,” she cried, “for, as I told you before, Mrs. Beauclerc, though a most exemplary woman, certainly had peculiar notions, which her birth and talents alone enabled her to act upon without incurring the surprise or censure of the world; and Miss Leycester seems so bigotted to her aunt’s opinions, I really think you have reason to be happy that she has declined your hand. You would not have liked to see your wife different from every other young man’s, and you must be sensible, her fortune is so small, she could be considered no match for you, even had she been all we could wish; and, indeed, Henry, these are such singularities in so young a woman, the more I think of them, the more they astonish me. I am sure before I was married, I never thought of asking your poor father whether he had any predilection or antipathy to balls, or plays, or parties; and afterwards, I should as soon have flown as presumed to interfere with his amusements, or question his religious opinions, because, poor

dear, good man, he liked races; nor did he doubt mine, because I always attended the steward's balls; and I am sure no two people could be happier; as a proof of that, he left me your sole guardian; and though I was only a little past thirty, I never would marry again, a most convincing testimony of unfeigned happiness and regard on both sides." By a long habit she had acquired the knack of shedding a few tears, whenever she alluded to her deceased husband; and Evanmore, who had so often heard of the extraordinary fidelity to his father, and love to himself, she had evinced by remaining a widow, that he thought he never could sufficiently appreciate such unparalleled heroism, forgot his own distress in his kind endeavours to banish this painful topic. Had he known the good lady was nearer forty than thirty when death deprived her of his father, and had really never been solicited to revoke her determination of living single for his sake, by any one whose alliance would not have robbed her of her present station in society, he might not, perhaps, have felt so very grateful. But ignorant of these facts, he became more

assured Felicia's conduct was, indeed, unreasonable and extraordinary.

"I would not have said all this," continued his mother, when she gained sufficient composure to revert to the original subject of their conversation, "had the engagement not been broken off between you; but now, I must confess, I think you may do much better."

"Oh! never, Mother," said Evanmore.

"You think so now, because you are under the influence of disappointment; but you will some day find to the contrary. Why, I am sure any of the three Miss Blackstones, with ten thousand pounds each, would be happy to marry you."

"The Miss Blackstones! each ten years older than myself, to make up for the ten thousand."

"Well, then, the two Miss Vernons, with fifteen thousand a piece, and the prospect of five more, at the death of an aunt already past her grand climacteric."

"You seem to forget one is lame, and the other squints; and both have the reputation of being confounded vixens."

“Come, then, now I am sure you can find no fault. What say you to Miss Leonora Caroline Desmond, with twenty thousand pounds independent of her father, pretty, young, amiable, and agreeable?”

“The merest little compound of milk and water, affectation, folly, and sentiment, I ever met with. Oh! no; no fainting, die-away, love-sick girl for me, mother. Had she forty, instead of twenty thousand, I would not marry a woman who shrieks at the sight of a grass-hopper, and swoons at the sound of a pop-gun.”

“Really you are very fastidious, Henry. And I now begin to think you will never be satisfied but with the lovely Rosalind Leycester.”

“Rosalind Leycester marry me!” And he laughed at the bare idea.

“And why not?” asked his mother. “You are sprung from an ancient family; and have a paternal estate of fifteen hundred a year of your own. Indeed, I cannot see—”

“Mother,” said he, “putting my own inclinations and her engagement to Mr. Osborne out of the question, Rosalind Leycester will

never be satisfied with any thing less than a baronetage ; and fifteen thousand a year would not be to her so much as fifteen hundred to—" he hesitated, he could not say Felicia—" her sister."

" But she will inherit Lady Wyedale's fortune."

" Not if she were to marry such a poor wretch as me, I promise you. Lady Wyedale, it is believed, was by no means pleased with her accepting Mr. Osborne, a man possessed of three thousand a year, and the prospect of an addition at the death of a relative ; and should she not fulfil her engagement with him, which would not excite my astonishment, depend upon it she will be influenced to do so by the hope of making a more splendid alliance."

" Oh ! of that I am by no means sure," said his mother, who, like many other people, would not be convinced a favourite theory was a fallacious one. " Mr. Osborne had no family to boast of, and even if Lady Wyedale did not countenance your marriage, or forgive it before her death, which I think highly improbable, so much attached to her as she ap-

appears, I do not agree with you in thinking Miss Rosalind would be sure to prove so very extravagant. It is not always that your gay, giddy girls turn out the worst wives. On the contrary, I often think, that after having seen all they can see, and enjoyed their youth as young people have a right to do, they become more settled. And after all, she could not frequent public places, or indulge in much dissipation if she were mistress of Alverston."

"Which she will never be, my dear mother," said Evanmore, with a smile; "for I should as soon think of paying my addresses, with a rent-roll of fifteen hundred a year, to a Princess of the blood royal, as to Rosalind Leycester, even if I liked her; and before I shall be in any spirits to act the part of a lover again, she will have had opportunities of marrying fifty times over."

His mother prophesied otherwise; and though he laughed and shook his head at all her predictions, persisted in declaring she could not see the force of his arguments, or be brought to believe even Rosalind Leycester would consider him so unimportant a capture.

To these observations he listened with the

same degree of incredulity he would have heard a fairy tale ; for though, as he hinted, he had reason to think, after something that passed at the masquerade, she would not speedily become Mrs. Osborne, he so highly esteemed her personal attributes, that he had little doubt Lord Edgermond, unable to resist her many charms, would ere long declare himself her admirer. But her remarks on Mrs. Beauclerc tended to strengthen his persuasion, that Felicia was unnecessarily pious ; and removed the half-formed determination he had made, to enter into that review of his principles, which she so earnestly advised. “ I shall never love any other woman,” thought he, as he retired to his room ; “ but I cannot compel her to marry me ; and, perhaps, as we now so entirely disagree with each other, our separation is a mutual advantage.”

His heart, however, remained sad, and the solitariness of Alverston seemed painfully increased by his alienation from Felicia, and his late residence in the metropolis.

CHAPTER III.

While yet the lover staid, the maid was strong,
But when he fled, she droop'd, and felt the wrong.

Crabbe.

“ And is he gone ? ”—on a sudden solitude
How oft that fearful question will intrude !
“ ’Twas but an instant past—and here he stood !
And now—” without the portal’s porch she rushed,
And then, at length, her tears in freedom gush’d
Big—bright—and fast, unknown to her they fell,
But still her *heart* refused to send—“ Farewell ! ”
For in that word—that fatal word—howe’er
We promise—hope—believe—there breathes despair.

FROM the trance of waking sorrow into which Felicia was thrown by hearing Evanmore rush out of the library, she was aroused by Rosalind, who stole on tip-toe into the room, her finger pressed to her ruby lip, and her attitude that of a playful child, eager to

learn some little secret, which it half suspects may be withheld.

“The captive has kissed his chains, I predict. Hey, what in tears!” she pursued, in an altered voice, as Felicia raised her streaming eyes.

It is difficult, when suffering under the pressure of severe disappointment, to avoid indistinctly censuring all who have been in any respect connected with the cause of our calamity; and, though she acquitted her of any intentional unkindness, Felicia turned involuntarily from the anxious gaze of her sister.

“Dearest Felicia, relieve my uneasiness,” said Rosalind. “Indeed, you know not how much I am affected at your distress. Where is Evanmore? Surely he has—” “Oh no, no!” cried Felicia, “he is gone—gone for ever.”

Rosalind’s conscience smote her with a stronger feeling of remorse than she had ever before experienced. She remembered how continually she had interposed to determine Evanmore, when apparently wavering, to persist in a mode of life which she knew Felicia disapproved. And she asked herself, with increasing alarm, whether it were possible that the

laughter and ridicule which she had so frequently levelled at Felicia's opinions, might have contributed to estrange him from her?

It is scarcely possible for any heart, however immersed in grief, to be so abstracted as to turn with indifference or disgust from the voice of affection. And as she witnessed Rosalind's evident uneasiness, Felicia felt all her former attachment revive. "Yes," she cried, throwing herself on Rosalind's bosom, while her voice was almost inarticulate from anguish, "Evanmore is lost!—in the wide world nothing is now left me to love but you!" Again Rosalind felt the stings of self-reproach. She had not intended to injure Felicia in the estimation of Evanmore, but she was conscious of having always felt a desire to eclipse her in his eyes; and with a sensation of unworthiness, she disengaged herself from Felicia's arms.

Rosalind's feelings were warm, and kindly, and her mind instinctively inclined to rectitude, but the former had never been fostered, and the finer perceptions of the latter were gradually becoming less sensitive. Her heart also, indurated by incessant scenes of dissipation, shrunk from the wearisome task of administer-

ing consolation to the sorrowful, or pursuing the thorny path of self-examination; and after endeavouring to soothe Felicia's anguish a few hours, she left her to lose, at a raffle, that sensation of uneasiness which a rapid and involuntary review of her own conduct, had just occasioned.

It is not difficult to hush the small still voice with which conscience reproaches us for trivial errors, nor to find palliations for what we are determined shall not give us pain. Rosalind speedily forgot both Felicia and Evanmore, in her anxiety to possess a pair of diamond earrings; and when, on her return home with the glittering prize, she was reminded by Felicia's pallid face and sunken eyes of the events of the morning, she soon learnt to think that, though, to be sure, poor Felicia was just now much to be pitied, yet, after all, the dissolution of her engagement with Evanmore ought not to be seriously regretted, especially by her family. There was no doubt so pretty, sensible, and amiable a girl, would have it in her power to make a much superior connexion; for Evanmore, though very handsome, and extremely good-tempered, and a man for whom

she should always retain a sincere regard, was certainly scarcely a match for her." And finally, ere the evening concluded, she not only ceased to lament her share in causing this sudden alteration in Felicia's situation, but had persuaded herself it was a circumstance which ought to be regarded with pleasure by all who loved her.

"Don't look so like 'Patience on a monument smiling at grief,' dearest Philly," said she, stooping to kiss Felicia's cold lips, as they separated for the night. "And pray go to sleep without thinking on what has passed. You know, dwelling on sorrow does not lighten the burthen; and, mark me if, some day, you will not rejoice at all this. I am not accustomed to moralize; but you know we are taught, good often comes out of evil; and in this instance, I am confident all things are for the best." She concluded these remarks with a movement of the head, scarcely less confident than that of her cousin elect, Mrs. Hustleton, when silencing the arguments of an antagonist by pronouncing her favourite expression, "*incontrovertible*."

"So, good night!" she cried, in a tone of

mingled apathy and playfulness that went to Felicia's heart.

"Stay a little while longer, Rosalind," she said, in a broken voice.

Rosalind complied; but she had passed the evening in a ball-room, and was tired and sleepy; and having, like many other people, taught herself to view the misfortunes of those around her with heroic fortitude, she soon seized an opportunity of retiring to her room, with a secret feeling of self-approbation at being so much of a philosopher as to reconcile herself thus easily to the unavoidable events of life.

Felicia's eyes followed her to the door.

"I would not have left her," she thought, "but I am not to her what she is to me. The strongest attachments are formed in retirement, not in the world. There is neither time nor opportunity for the play of the feelings—the expansion of the heart—in the garish scenes of fashionable life."

Though it was not in Felicia's power to comply with her sister's advice, she exercised a much higher degree of resignation. She could not close her eyes; but ere morning her agony

gradually softened into a feeling of disappointment, severe, indeed, but not intolerable; for no self-reproach mingled with her grief. That Evanmore was lost to her for ever—that she should never more feel attachment towards any other human being, was her implicit conviction, and she wept with fresh emotion as she contemplated the wreck of those little fairy fabrics of domestic love and happiness which she had delighted to build.

“ I shall indeed be lonely; but why should I mourn that I am destined to lead that life which my aunt led before me. Was she wretched, was she useless? I shall never be blessed with a husband’s love, a child’s caress; but shall I, in possession of so many blessings, dare to repine because this is denied me? No; the mild spirit of my more than mother shall not reproach me. Rosalind will marry, and that exalted pleasure she felt in succouring my infancy, in forming my mind, I may experience while guiding my Rosalind’s children to virtue. Even should it be the will of Heaven to rob me of her in whom centres my every hope of earthly consolation, I will not despair. I am a pilgrim bound to a distant country, and my passage

may be a dark one, but it must be short; and the gloominess of my path will render still brighter the glorious scene to which I am journeying. How often has my dear aunt enforced on my mind, that the guilty only are hopelessly miserable—that virtue will enliven the humblest dwelling, though the glow of happiness may never be diffused over it. Let me then, like her, be patient and virtuous, that, by resignation and active piety, I may hope to obtain greater blessings than those of which I may here be deprived. Let me not waste, in the languor of unavailing sorrow, the talents with which I have been entrusted, or sully the happiness of others by indulging in selfish grief; and though lost to all the more tender connexions of life, I shall be esteemed by those whose good opinion I am most anxious to merit. And is not the approbation of the virtuous a gratification of the highest and purest nature? Nor whatever it may cost me to tear Evanmore from my heart, shall I grieve without consolation; for the sacrifice of my affections will have been offered at the shrine of duty. This, then, shall be my polar star, and it will guide me through the dark hour when the

spirit faints under so bitter a privation. Yes, it will irradiate the gloom of my solitary habitation! Oh! its brightness shall shed a ray of joy over even my desolate bosom!"

Such were the reflections and resolutions that calmed the first paroxysms of Felicia's anguish under this heavy affliction. But she was no heroine, and to say, that these were her unvarying feelings, would be, to ascribe to her a degree of resignation and fortitude overstrained and unnatural. That Evanmore and herself had parted to meet no more, was the prominent thought of her mind; and though she strove to conceal her internal sufferings, the half-suppressed sigh, the variation of her complexion, the sudden contraction of her open brow, continually betrayed, that she dwelt upon her loss. Vainly she arraigned herself for a weakness of which she was sensible, and determined to find consolation and joy in the steady perseverance with which she tried to discharge the duties of her present sphere: a feeling of desolation, a dreary loneliness sometimes enshrouded her soul, and at these moments of intense anguish, she became more aware of the immeasurable distance which

exists between profession and practice. She who, while temptation was far distant, thought she could have risen superior to its sorest trials, was now obliged to summon every energy of her mind to subdue the complainings of a refractory heart.

The first hour of dawning serenity was devoted to writing a letter to Mrs. Marshington, acquainting her with the result of her *eclaircissement* with Evanmore, and the next to consoling her faithful attendant. Poor Jenny was in truth a sincere participator in her affliction; and when she could really bring her mind to believe that Mr. Evanmore would never be her master, felt almost as much grief as Felicia had experienced, on perceiving that he could never be her husband. She delivered his message amid bursts of sorrow, and though Felicia's severe rebuke, when she hinted her opinion of Rosalind on the morning of the masquerade, restrained her from any similar indulgence of her resentment, she longed to pour out the bitterness of her wrath upon her for having, as she firmly believed, been the occasion of the misunderstanding which robbed her mistress of a lover, and herself of the exalted situation

of housekeeper. In all her mortifications this had been her joy, her consolation; and she wept not more from blasted ambition, than the consciousness that her enemy, Miss Juliana, would rejoice at her disappointment.

As her mind resumed its former tone, and she began again to take an interest in those around her, Felicia perceived Rosalind was become unusually thoughtful, and remarked, for the first time, that Mr. Osborne was no longer a visitor in Russel square; as, however, his friends resided in the country, she did not feel any surprise at this circumstance, till she observed that his name never by any chance escaped the lips of either his mistress or Lady Wyedale. She then began to speculate a little on the cause of his absence, and connecting it with Rosalind's change of manner, to believe some impediment had arisen to retard, or perhaps prevent their union. She narrowly scrutinized Rosalind's face, but nothing she could read there confirmed or removed her suspicions. She was certainly graver than customary; but did not still appear out of spirits; and her countenance, though its usual gaiety seemed clouded, wore its freshest bloom. Lord

Edgermond's desertion had, she knew, given her so much secret uneasiness, it was a subject to which she never alluded; but, fearless of exciting any deep emotion, even should adverse circumstances have interposed between her and Mr. Osborne, she fairly asked Rosalind what was the cause of that distance between them, she had at length noticed.

"So you have found it out at last by yourself. Well, the fact is, that all is over between him and me. Come, don't extend your eyes so very wide, for I will soon relieve your curiosity. And now for the solution to the enigma. You recollect the masquerade?" Felicia's changing colour betrayed it had not escaped her memory. "At that said place I had a *rencontre* with *le désiré*—I was suddenly seized with an unlucky *accès de coquetterie*. You know I have a *tic* of playing off one lover against another; and to bring my tale to a *finale*, Osborne thought proper to feel himself offended. I had my reasons for not choosing to humble myself after my wickedness, and so it is all off—yes, quite off between us: indeed the only marvel is, that it ever was on; for after all, Osborne, though tolerably good-looking,

wants that air which is essential to a man who aspires to move in the first circles; and his family connexions, notwithstanding the broad assertions of my good old friend Mrs. Hustleton, do not quite place his blood on a par with that of the Howards, or entitle him to claim kindred with Bourbon or Nassau. But, I assure you, joking apart, even had not Edgermond suddenly changed the current of my love, it would not have flowed smoothly, for I should have felt much mortified at the little attention which was paid him by Lady Clarinda and her *coterie*. How he came to get a ticket I cannot imagine, unless it was given him on the ground of his engagement with me, for he is evidently considered a person of no importance by genteel people; and even my dearly beloved cousin, that was to have been, I firmly believe would not keep her footing among them, if they did not fear her; for, though she is, in fact, nobody, she can exert that unruly member the tongue to such purpose, that those who displease her, generally rue their imprudence before they are much older. The Sirocco is not, in short, more dangerous to the body, than her breath to the reputation of those whom she dislikes.

I see, by your demure face and profound silence, you think I am greatly to blame, and yet you know, I am positive you do, that I never cared a straw for him."

"I certainly always feared you did not feel that regard for him you ought to have entertained; and if you remember, I many times indirectly endeavoured to prevail upon you not to receive the addresses of a man whom, I felt persuaded, pique, or some other motive, only impelled you to tolerate; but still having accepted his offer, I will not be so courtly as to say I do not consider you have acted ill. You should have analyzed your sentiments towards him before you allowed him to take an expensive house, and furnish it under your not less expensive taste."

"Ah! as to that, I have done him no harm there. A house he must soon have had: it is not beyond his fortune, and if I had not superintended its fitting up, he would never have had so elegant an abode: so, on the whole, he ought rather to feel obliged to me."

"Doubtless he must feel much gratitude towards a woman who has thus trifled with his time and his affections."

“Time!—Had he been in trade, like Mrs. Hustleton’s better half, who, peace be to his manes, is as though he had never lived, he might have had cause of complaint, and reason to consider the hours spent in dancing after me, and calculating on my possessions, in the light of a bad debt, or a rue bargain—a loss in trade, a sad speculation, &c. &c.; but that can be no loss which we earnestly desire to get rid of; and as to his affections, in spite of self-love I must own, I really do not think they will sustain any severe injury. To be serious, I have some time believed he built hopes on Lady Wyedale’s attachment to me, and the moment that idea possessed my imagination, I felt an additional unwillingness to complete the engagement into which I know not what drove me, unless it was infatuation; for assuredly a man, with a despicable three thousand a year, can be considered no extraordinary catch for a girl of my age, rank, and (false modesty avaunt) figure. Besides which, after being long unable to fathom the cause of auntie Wyedale’s daily-augmenting ill-humour, I began to think the hopes which I saw he was building, might not

have so sandy a foundation as I at first imagined; and that, conscious she intended to make me her heir instead of our long-legged cousin, Jemmy Leycester, who has always been held *in terrorem* before my eyes, she thought I was forming a poor alliance; yet, determined not to avow her intention, had no means of making me perceive my folly unless by increased petulance. I therefore resolved to get rid of him as speedily as might be; and as Benedick's brushing his hat, was construed into a sign of his falling in love with Beatrice, so my yawning whenever he happened to address me, and taking up a book whenever we were left alone, might have announced pretty plainly that I was falling out of love with Francis Osborne, if any body had been observant enough to notice them."

"Really, Rosalind, you evince a policy I should have thought incompatible with your volatility of character," said Felicia, a little displeased with the cold, calculating prudence by which she, for the first time, appeared actuated.

"Speak out. I like things by their right

names. You mean to say you did not think I had been such a mercenary, contriving, selfish little jilt."

"Why no, not that neither," said Felicia, smiling.

"Well, something approaching very nearly nevertheless—and perhaps I am a little interested: once I was romantically generous, like yourself, but the world is a fine school for correcting such absurdities. I saw the taking care of number one was the grand business of life; and if, as I shrewdly suspect, Osborne was induced to pay attentions to me merely because he thought I should be an heiress, he was not less mercenary than I am in declining to receive them, on finding I shall be one. I see you are preparing to argue the matter, and as I have no inclination to be your antagonist, we will wave the topic. I have now entirely satisfied your curiosity."

"Not entirely. I hope you have parted on tolerable terms, and that you have got back your letters."

"No, we are at daggers drawing; my effusions still remain in his possession, and may there remain for me. Hearts and darts, loves

and doves, are now quite obsolete, entirely exploded from all genteel modern epistles; and as I never dealt much in any hyperbolical expressions of attachment, he is welcome not only to retain, but to shew them to any friends who may desire to peruse a love-letter indited by the merry Miss Rosalind, as your maid, I understand, calls me. *A-propos* of Jenny! it is fortunate for me that her eyes do not possess any of the dangerous property ascribed to those of the Basilisk, or all my foolery would have been hushed long ago. And even now, did I put any faith in the power of the evil eye, I should dread to meet her, for really she looks as if she would like to transfix me to the spot on which I happen to stand."

This was a subject on which Felicia had no inclination to dilate. She was aware that Jenny felt by no means in charity with Rosalind; and unwilling either to betray or conceal her motives, she hastily reverted again to the topic before under discussion; and scarcely knowing what she said, asked if Rosalind would have nothing to fear from Mr. Osborne's resentment.

"No, what can he do? I see no channel of

redress for his wrongs, unless he drags me into a court of justice for a breach of promise of marriage, and from that I take it he would get little satisfaction. There is an old saw about suing a beggar, and catching something very diminutive. Well, don't look so shocked, I am ashamed of my own vulgarity I confess. Really I wish I could forget a great deal of that lore I obtained during the first four or five years that I spent with auntie Wyedale. She was a gay lady then, and I was consigned so completely to the care of servants during the time she was engrossed by company and amusements, that I acquired a fund of servants-hall information which I fear will stick by me for life ; for though she, at length, saw the necessity of changing my society, Madame La Fripponnier had little to recommend her, but the accidental circumstance of being born abroad ; and though she mended my manners, my morals remained in much the same state as she found them. Indeed it could not reasonably be expected she should instruct me on points where she was herself ignorant ; and unluckily nature has given me such a strange aptitude to remember what I had better forget, that I should be happy if

some ingenious philosopher would devise something diametrically opposite to mnemonics, and teach me to consign to oblivion, a large portion of the refuse which now crowds up the recesses of my mind."

"I wish it were possible, indeed," said Felicia. "And after yourself, the first persons whom I should desire to see benefitted by the invention, would be your *ci-devant* lover and his cousin; for I am much afraid this unfortunate '*accès de coquetterie*,' as you are pleased to term it, will render them your enemies for life."

"I am not without some misgivings of the same sort myself; for that he had speculated on auntie Wyedale's green acres, is a fact I am assured of, from his being on all occasions so anxious that what we did should please her Ladyship. Now as her Ladyship had given her consent to our union, though with the grace of a bruin, if he had not looked beyond the possession of my fair hand, her Ladyship's inclinations would never have been so much the object of his regard, I opine. 'Don't mind her,' said I one day, when, after she had been desperately cross, he was suggest-

ing to me fifty plans for getting her into a decent temper again. 'It is a great object to us to please her, you know, dear Rosalind,' said he, with something of the Hustleton whine, and feline expression of the eye. 'Not at all,' said I; 'as she has given her consent to our marriage, she cannot withdraw it, and that is *all* we have either to expect or fear from her, you know.' I fixed my eye on his phiz as I spoke, and saw in a moment from the dropping of his under jaw, the workings of his little narrow, mercenary soul. He grinned horribly a ghastly smile as he assented, but it did not deceive me; I saw he was that heterodox animal, a prudent lover, and I therefore felt the less compunction at making him for a short time a pussy-cat's-paw. Yes, however mortifying to self, I must repeat, I have no idea *les intérêts du cœur* were all the interests he had in view. I do not know, however, whether this is not more to be lamented, on consideration; for the more grief he feels at the loss of *l'argent*, the more he will try to persuade himself and the world he laments my pretty face; and if he has half of either the abilities or inclination for mis-

chief of his amiable relative, I may anticipate some little plaguing from him, I believe."

"I am more afraid of Mrs. Hustleton," said Felicia. "Young men don't like to descant much on such misfortunes: he will probably endeavour to prevail on himself to think that he relinquished his claim to your hand, because his self-love—"

"No, that he cannot do," interrupted Rosalind, to whom the idea of his resentment was far more gratifying, than the possibility of his not fully understanding that she had dismissed him. But I am not afraid of his wrath after all, for he visits no where, where his opinion of me could do me any real disservice; and as to the old gentlewoman his cousin, though I dare say she could impale me alive with her own hands, she dare not be very clamorous. She is wise enough to know, that people who live in glass-houses, ought not to throw stones; or if she should not be in possession of this useful piece of information, it must be my business to teach it her."

"Can you be speaking of the same person, whom, only a few months ago, I know you cen-

sured me for not uniting with you in extolling to the skies?"

"Oh, yes, the very same," said she, laughing. "Circumstances alter cases, you know. I am not, however, aware I did extol her to the skies. I might though, for I then seriously intended marrying Osborne, and was not insensible to the many pretty things I could purchase with her three per cents and five per cents. And had the engagement gone on, I should probably have continued to think of her as I then did."

"Till it ended in matrimony;" said Felicia. "I fear your senses would then have returned to you."

"There you are quite mistaken. Whilst I had an eye to her fifteen thousand pounds, she would always have looked well in my sight. I would even have barricadoed my ears against her 'give me leave Ma'am,' and all the varied modulations of her voice, while addressing superiors and inferiors (equals she has none), from the cringing, fawning, sycophantic, whine of canting hypocrisy, to the loud domineering tones of dogmatising insolence."

"Rosalind," said Felicia, with a sigh, "these

are cold, worldly maxims and motives for so young a woman. I was in hopes, when you attempted to deceive me, you were under the influence of delusion yourself."

"And so I was. In the first place it was my duty and interest to think and speak well of my future relations ; and in the next, that same fifteen thousand in perspective, did really dazzle my vision a little. To you, Felicia, who are scarcely human, this may seem very mercenary, and very incredible ; but be assured all other persons would have felt and acted as I then did ; and, like me, would have seen clearer, when their optics were no longer confused by the shine of the gold. It is in vain to deny that money does possess a charm which invests its owner with attractions which we feel without knowing how to define or account for them ; but so it is ; for every day's experience demonstrates that it extends to those whose riches will never benefit us. This truth was admitted even by the greatest moralist of the age, Dr. Johnson ; authority which I am sure you will not attempt to controvert ; and the only thing that chafes my spirit is, when I see people absolutely prostrating themselves before the idol of their worship,

affecting to say they would pay court to no man for his riches — ‘ what is his money to them ?’ &c. &c. &c. The question is answered in a moment, by first introducing them to a wealthy man, and then ushering them into the society of a poor one. Dear, how much the periphrasis—the circumlocution—the shading—the softening in their explanations with those above them, when they sometimes venture to disagree in an opinion, contrasts with the dictatorial manner, flat contradiction, haughty supercilious insolence, or cool contemptuous indifference, which marks their arguments with the poor man. These remarks don’t apply to you, dearest Philly—for, as I have told you before, you are an unique,—but to the world in general; and especially those who, secretly conscious of its power, are loudest in denying its influence, that they may deceive themselves as well as others. This class of persons also, themselves in possession of real comfort, are continually declaring that money confers no happiness; perpetually advising their less prosperous relatives and friends to be *contented*; wondering at their anxiety about worldly affairs; and taking extraordinary

merit to themselves because they are so satisfied with their condition. I long to tell them the moderation, on which they pique themselves so highly, arises not from virtue or philosophy, but emanates from self-complacency, crowned by unvaried good fortune. Oh, how I abhor such cold-blooded, deceitful affectation. It is just on a par with the casuistry of Lady Wyedale, who, though she cannot stir without a carriage, dine without every delicacy of the season, or put on her own shoes, declares that she sees no hardship in servants trudging through the dirtiest streets in the most tempestuous weather—poor people living on potatoes, and earning them by the sweat of their brow. And then, if you attempt to argue the matter with her, she gives you as a reason, that they have always been accustomed to such things. Accustomed! yes, as we are accustomed to the caprice of her temper, which habit certainly renders bearable, though it is an evil which we daily feel, and ought to excite for us the compassion of those who are more fortunately situated.”

Felicia was not one of those persons who esteem poverty a light burthen; for though

she had never felt its pressure, she had early seen its withering influence on those who did. She knew that affluence cannot confer on the indolent and discontented a moment's happiness, or ward off the arrow of affliction; but she knew that the chilling power of penury could point the dagger of misery, and not only deprive us of those comforts we all instinctively must desire, but rob the generous bosom of the first, greatest pleasure it is capable of enjoying, affording relief to the sick and wretched; and she had witnessed so much of this *cheap philosophy*, since she became a denizen of the fashionable world, that she readily assented to the justice of these hasty observations. There was a something also in them that showed that, had Rosalind's mind been properly directed, she would have scorned her present habits and feelings. And as, with renewed attachment she clasped her to her arms, the hope that she might some day guide this lovely erring being to the straight, but narrow path of virtue, shone like a star, and brightened her gloomy hemisphere.

CHAPTER IV.

She is with persevering strength endued,
And can be cheerful—for she will be good.

Crabbe.

IT was not before the expiration of a week after Evanmore's departure, that Felicia could summon courage to request Rosalind would formally communicate to Lady Wyedale, that her engagement with Mr. Evanmore had terminated; and under circumstances which precluded the least probability of its ever being renewed. Rosalind readily complied; but suggested that, as her Ladyship was just then particularly indisposed, and *par conséquence* particularly cross, it would be better to defer the information till she was more of a convalescent. Rosalind knew her aunt's peculiarities of temper so well, that Felicia unhesitatingly acquiesced in this arrangement, without, however,

exactly seeing its object. She was not aware that Rosalind, apprehending Lady Wyedale would feel extremely provoked at her being thus thrown on her hands, good naturedly wished not to reveal this supposed piece of disagreeable intelligence till, restored to something like mental tranquillity, by bodily ease, she might receive it with more complacency ; and equally certain her Ladyship would rejoice at her emancipation from Mr. Osborne, had reserved the change in her own situation as a sweetmeat to render the other less unpalatable. Nearly a fortnight elapsed before Rosalind judged it safe to open her budget ; and after having with much circumlocution and caution, announced that Felicia was no longer the affianced wife of Evanmore, she saw with astonishment, that it produced very contrary emotions in her Ladyship's bosom to those she had anticipated.

Lady Wyedale, indeed, received this unlooked-for intelligence with the sincerest pleasure. She had conjectured, from Evanmore's absence, that some quarrel had arisen between them in consequence of his going to the masquerade ; but knowing how ardently Felicia loved him, she had not entertained the

most distant hope that it would be the occasion of a final separation. Delighted at the prospect thus again presented to her eyes of a child of Major Leycester's becoming great, she so far forgot her usual coldness of manner as to go to her room, congratulate her on having relinquished so ruinous a connection, express the pleasure she felt at the idea of her supplying the chasm which Rosalind's marriage would so soon make in her affections and establishment, and hint her intention of considering her for the future in a very different light from that in which she had hitherto regarded her. Felicia almost feared that this sudden and unexpected display of kindness sprang not from the amiable wish to soothe her in this bitter hour of distress, yet she felt affected by it; and, half censuring herself for uncharitableness, as Lady Wyedale left the room, tenderly took her hand, and assured her, that this act of condescending goodness should be repaid by a life devoted to her service. Lady Wyedale understood the innuendo, and smiled; but she had no inclination just now to receive so great a reward from her hands. Her present wish was, to see her marry well; and, full of schemes, she returned to

her own apartment, to make a considerable alteration in her will. She was busily employed in drawing up a codicil to transfer the major part of her fortune from Rosalind, whose ungrateful indifference to her many hints that she disliked her connection with Mr. Osborne, had excited her warm, though secret displeasure, when Rosalind *sans ceremonie* burst upon her, and communicated in her usual flippant way, that she was likely to have two nieces instead of one devoted to her service for life. Her astonishment was excessive, and the pleasure she would have felt only a few hours before, was overbalanced by the recollection that she had irretrievably bound herself to share the advantages of her patronage and fortune with her sister. She could not, indeed, have refused to continue her present shelter to Felicia, had she known this circumstance before, but she would have been guarded in her expressions of its future continuance, and cautiously abstained from hinting at any further kindness. Trying to smother her mixed sensations of joy and uneasiness, she asked if Mr. Osborne had really taken his final leave; and learnt that his parting bow was made on the same day that saw

the dissolution of Felicia's engagement with Evanmore, namely, the morning after the masquerade. In a voice choked by passion, she demanded to know why this important change in her situation had been so long held from her, upbraided her with the vilest ingratitude; and, in the paroxysms of her indignation, (reckless of what she said so that her words were but calculated to give pain), accused her of deceitfulness, coquetry, folly, and hypocrisy. Astonished and dismayed at a result so wholly unsuspected, Rosalind fled from her presence with rage, shame, and mortification. She now began to believe her Ladyship had no real intention of adopting her as her heir, and that the dislike she had manifested to Mr. Osborne, merely arose from the natural capriciousness of her temper. She did not lament that she had dismissed Osborne, for she had never liked him, but she was exasperated at the idea of having been deceived, duped; and, burning with resentment, she sought Felicia to communicate the insults she had received. Felicia was a sympathising listener, but she had ceased to feel surprise at Lady Wyedale's vacillations; and, anxious not

to widen the breach between persons so circumstanced, she tried to soften Rosalind's wrath by reminding her of her Ladyship's general kindness, and the obligations she was really under to her for essential benefits. Rosalind would not admit the latter, and disputed the former. "She may be attached to me, but her love is shown in such capricious forms, that one can't feel either gratitude for her affection, or certainty of its possession. Is she ever two hours in the same mind? Will not what I did yesterday without giving the smallest offence, to-day excite her sorest displeasure? Are these the proofs of love? And as to the gratitude I owe her, I esteem our obligations at present reciprocal. She gives me a home, and in return I divert her *ennui*, endure her storms, minister to her idleness. Could she do without me? No; a woman so indolent, that she is incapable of summoning exertion enough to issue an invitation for a party, and without spirit enough to read a novel, must ever have some one to humour her whims and indulge her laziness."

"My aunt, remember, is now becoming an old woman," said Felicia. "And remember,

dearest Rosalind, that circumstance alone ought to render us lenient to her foibles."

"When she is sufficiently an old woman not to dress and behave like a young one, I may grant something to the plea of years ; but while her Ladyship, by every effort of her soul, disclaims all right and title to the character of age, she has no right to expect its advantages. And as to its being our place to treat her with respect, because we know she is what she, nevertheless, will not allow herself to be, I can only say that you who have been instructed to do your duty without reference to any thing else, might not, perhaps, find it a difficult task, but I should ; and her Ladyship has no right to expect me to act from principles she never instilled into me. Well, if ever I do live to become an old woman, I hope I shall not shelter idleness under a cloak never worn but for the occasion ; nor be unreasonable enough to expect young people will be so good as to grant me the privileges and honours of advanced life, while I studiously endeavour by rouge, affectation, and artifice, to hide my claims to the distinction. In this respect I admire even Mrs. Berkely. She is, to be sure, a sad long-faced Christian,

and has a little the aspect of a tragedy queen : but then she is consistent ; and without looking farther, I could never behave saucily to that woman. There is something so dignified in the measured decorum of her behaviour, so respectable in her flowing black silk robes and silver hair, in the calm composure with which she takes out her spectacles, that though I knew she did not promote my cause with Berkely, and often gave me many a sly rap on the knuckles, I never dared to offer any thing in the shape of a retort, when my eye caught a view of her person. Now, in my squabbles with auntie Wyedale, the more I look at her flaming cheeks, and see the flowers and feathers on her auburn caxon, dancing with their mistress's rage, the more I always feel inclined to continue the contest with spirit."

"Let me hope you will think differently at some time, and let me congratulate you on having regained somewhat of your accustomed good-humour ; the term 'auntie' is never used when in a downright rage."

"Your congratulations are premature," she said, but with a smile that contradicted the assertion. "I am still in a violent passion, and a

little alarmed into the bargain; for, to tell the truth, as we stood looking at each other, with eyes that did no justice to our feelings, if they announced not a desire to strike each other dead, I saw, ‘codicil to my will,’ written in large letters on a sheet of paper. More I could not read, for she shuffled all the papers into a drawer a moment afterwards; and, uniting this circumstance with my singular reception, I am inclined to believe she had just made up her mind to bequeath all her goods and chattles to that said cousin of ours, tall James Leicester, with whom I have been long threatened in such hints as these. ‘It does not follow, ‘because we bring people up they are to inherit ‘our fortune—*they* have not so much claim as ‘the rest of our relations, for whom we have ‘done nothing; and at all events a small ‘legacy is the *most* they can themselves expect’—or, ‘property should always descend ‘to the *male* heir’—followed a few minutes afterwards, by an apparently indirect question about my uncle James’s family, or a careless remark on his son James being so promising a young man. Now, knowing that my poor uncle James is, what my poor grandfather

Leycester was, a poor man ; and that when he wanted a trifle to article this very son to a solicitor, she refused the loan of three hundred pounds, I had no real apprehension that she would ever seriously think of making him her representative. But, on my honour, I am at present startled, and should not wonder if he, to whom she once refused the paltry sum of three hundred pounds, might one day receive from her better than three thousand a year."

"It is too common a case, after leaving the drowning to struggle alone, to overwhelm them with assistance when they no longer require it," said Felicia. "And if Lady Wyedale would leave you a handsome legacy, and myself a small one, I should be perfectly contented that my poor uncle's family came in for the bulk of her estates."

"So should not I," cried Rosalind. "I have derived under her roof a taste for luxuries which will make a mere competence poverty to me, and imbibed a predilection for refined society which will make all other disgusting. I would, however, willingly part with a considerable share ; and when I was more secure than I am now, I often begged her to invite our

four cousins, Miss Mary, Miss Rebecca, Miss Martha, and Miss Bridget, the spinster sisters of the aforesaid terrific James, to spend a winter with us, just to give the poor things a chance; but she never would. It has, indeed, always been a part of her policy not to be intimate with relations, whose necessities might be a reproach to her inhumanity, or detract from her consequence; and then, after having kept them at such an awful distance, that each party gradually ceases to remember the ties of affinity, she says, it cannot be expected she should care for people of whom she knows nothing—and there ends the acquaintance! On this subject she has, indeed, some strange notions. She acknowledges all those relatives whom it is *creditable* to acknowledge, and the rest she affects to consider no relations at all. And why, do you think? Because she is not intimate with them. Therefore, a rich cousin with whom she chooses to be acquainted, because the acquaintance will do her honour, or may be convenient, though only related in the fifth degree, is much nearer than a poor cousin german with whom she has, from motives of worldly wisdom, cut the connection. This

nice, subtle distinction, I believe, owes its origin entirely to herself. Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King at Arms, and every member of the Heralds Office, would, I dare say, be astonished to learn, that relationship does not depend on blood, but upon circumstances produced by inclination on the side of the affluent branches of a family, who may free themselves in a moment from the links and duties of consanguinity, by not owning those whom it is inconvenient or unpleasant to them to know."

"While I see and admit that Lady Wyedale is not exactly what we could wish her," said Felicia, "principle and policy equally require that we should

' Be to her virtues very kind,
And to her failings ever blind.'

I also earnestly advise you, dearest Rosalind, to make overtures of peace to her directly. I am sure she loves you, notwithstanding her occasional hastiness, and, perhaps, in defiance of tall cousin James Leycester, she may yet leave you a large portion of her wealth: at least, I hope she will."

"You really are an angel," said Rosalind, fondly patting her cheek, as her heart and

her understanding acknowledged the disinterestedness and wisdom of these remarks. "Like Eve in her days of innocence, whatever you say is wisest, virtueest, discreetest, best, and you would never have proved Adam a lover by the fallacy of his judgment; for you would not, I am sure, have touched the apple which has cost all her sons, and especially daughters, so dear."

"You evince quite as much mistaken attachment towards me by this panegyric, as our great forefather displayed when complimenting Eve," said Felicia, laughing. "I am neither wisest, virtueest, nor discreetest, and so very, very far from being best, that I feel I fall infinitely short of what I ought to be. In defiance of your frequent eulogies, I assure you, the most I can claim with any degree of honesty, is a desire to discharge the humble duties of my station, and an earnest endeavour to benefit by the great advantages I have received."

"Oh, pray, my dear, don't be so unnaturally modest. You remind me of the heroine of some novel I once read, whose humility was so profound, that when stating to a friend her doubts and fears, as to whether she should be

able on a reverse of fortune to obtain her own support, unconscious of her varied powers, thus diffidently recapitulates her pretensions: 'I am mistress of my own language; familiar with French and Italian; know something of Latin, German, drawing, and music; am conversant with accounts, can correct the press, write short-hand, *break sugar*, and *run errands*.' Now, had this tirade been addressed to me, I would have answered the Lady with Rochefoucault's maxim, that affected simplicity is refined imposture, or with two lines of Professor Porson's—

‘For the sin of all others the Devil admires,
Is the sin of false humility.’

Don't be offended, Philly: you often favour me with a little wholesome advice, and I feel as if I had not hitherto been sufficiently generous in returning the compliment. So in the hope we three, that is you, and I, and Lady Wyedale, especially dear Lady Wyedale, may mend by our exertions to improve each other, I bid you adieu till dinner; for I am going to take a walk in the Park, with—I dare not say whom, but your dolorous visage tells me you require no further explanation.”

“Stay, dear Rosalind,” cried Felicia, “I must have some conversation with you on that subject.”

“Indeed you must not,” was her reply. “You are there a trespasser on forbidden ground. And more than that, *vous y perdrez vos pas.*” She darted through the door as she spoke, and Felicia was reluctantly compelled to postpone, once more, the explanation she was so anxious to receive from Rosalind of Lord Edgermond’s conduct, in delaying to solicit her hand, while he seemed to have offered his affections.

CHAPTER V.

“Whoever thou art, who feelest thy mind oppressed with sorrow, thy spirits sunk, thy activity gone; if the world present no object which seems worthy of thy care, if thou view it with weariness and disgust, one remedy remains. Consider, if it be possible for thee in any way whatever to do good. This is possible in every situation. Do it without delay; exert all thy power for the happiness of others, and thou wilt find thy own.”

Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity.

FELICIA had all the feelings of the woman, but they were tempered by that equanimity which is the peculiar characteristic of a Christian: she could not, therefore, be long subject to the vehemence of tempestuous grief; and though she still believed she should never know real happiness again, sentiments of resignation and habits of self-government were gradually diffusing a not unpleasing calm over

her bosom, when she received the following letter from her friend, Mrs. Marshington :

“ Had I not known that premature consolation is seldom productive but of increased anguish, I would instantly have answered your letter, to express my sincere sympathy in that distress you have so pathetically painted ; and with it my high approbation of the step from which it arises.

“ I own the dejected style of your two last letters, and my knowledge of the character of each, prepared me for this termination of your views. We find few persons endowed with sufficient heroism to resist the infection of example, particularly when accompanied by beauty, wealth, and fashion ; and fewer still, in whom is united every good quality. Mr. Evanmore I knew to possess many ; but firmness and constancy, the cements of virtue, were not those by which he was most distinguished. I thought him an amiable man ; but I will candidly own, as far as I could judge, his actions seemed rather to arise from intuition than education—his opinions founded on imitation, rather than reflection. I feared, there-

fore, he would not be proof against the blandishments to which he was exposed; and as I felt assured you would despise that phantom of piety which teaches us to brave the feelings of our heart at a distance, while it leaves us their prey at the moment we are called up to conquer them, I am much more grieved than surprised at the dissolution of your engagement. I will not, however, dwell on the past, lest I may tear open a half-closed wound; allow me only, my dear Felicia, to congratulate you on having had strength of principle and fortitude of mind sufficient to sacrifice all you esteem happiness at the shrine of religion. As yet, I fear you can scarcely teach your refractory heart to bear, without murmuring, this heavy deprivation; but be not dismayed, that period will arrive, and with healing in its wings. A very trifling intercourse with the world is sufficient to show us that happiness is not always the accompaniment of virtue, because for that there is reserved a higher reward in the world to come; and, in proportion as we are miserable here, will be the measure and glory of our felicity hereafter. Perhaps it may be one of the merciful, though inscrutable designs of Providence,

that even the joys of Heaven shall be increased by a contrast with the sorrows of life; and who, with such a brilliant hope in view, would repine to endure a short pilgrimage of affliction which should add *felicity* to *felicity* of eternal duration? But for those smaller sacrifices to duty, which it sometimes falls to our lot to make, there has been graciously granted *even here* an assurance that they are acceptable to the Divine Being, and an encouragement to their performance given, in the *secret satisfaction* which always follows them. This internal peace—this heavenly tranquillity will so surely be yours, that I shall hasten to reply to some passages in your letter which, though probably natural to one in your situation, I hope to show you, are founded in error. You say, you ‘cannot again feel the slightest attachment to any man, and shall consequently never marry.’ Dear Felicia, do not labour under the delusion so common to a young mind (particularly one like your’s, tinctured with the romance often attendant upon a generous spirit) of supposing that none but a first attachment can render marriage happy. Every day’s experience denotes the fallacy of this popular error; and

even demonstrates, that those whom unpropitious circumstances have withheld from entering into that engagement during the age of fancy, are often happier than they who were united to the object of their earliest tenderness. Disappointment has then chastised the exuberance of youthful expectation, and knowledge of human nature prepared each to bear with the failings of the other. If you doubt this, fix your attention on the marriages which have decided, for ever, the destiny of our two acquaintance, Mrs. Lorimer and Mrs. Danvers. They were, in every sense of the word, love matches; for the one, you know, was contracted at Gretna green, and the other, though sanctioned by the approbation of every friend they severally possessed, was entered into with equal ardour. In Mrs. Lorimer's case there was every thing to protect the passion which had sprung up in her bosom, and every thing to embellish it—fortune, lovely children, and the approval of friends. Yet neither, you are aware, is now esteemed superlatively rich in domestic love or peace. It is not necessary to point out the cause of dissention—the fact that it exists is sufficient for my theory.

“ On this subject I have, indeed, a right to speak with peculiar confidence; for I speak from experience. You know, generally, that Mr. Marshington was not the object of my first choice; but your youth prevented me from ever revealing how long and how fondly I once loved another. To the gratification of this attachment nothing was wanting but the concurrence of his father—it could never be obtained—and for years we mutually mourned his obduracy. Equally forbidden by pride and principle from entering a family that would have spurned me, I then tried to conquer a passion which promised to undermine my health, and destroy those purposes of usefulness, for which we were both created. The effort was painful—but the struggle was not long—the sorrow was not remediless. Mr. Marshington’s addresses were enforced by the wishes of my family. I had then seen it is *not necessary to adore* the being with whom we form such an engagement, and learnt (what, a few years before, I should have believed impossible) that a good understanding and a good heart are almost as sure to create affection as they are certain to command esteem. I became his—

new duties—new scenes—new joys—new views engrossed my attention and heart; and though, even now, I regard, with respect, him who first possessed my affections, I seldom pass a day without a feeling of gratitude that our attachment was dissolved. This, I trust, will be your case; but should it not, you may still experience the most refined and solid pleasures. I by no means consider marriage absolutely essential to happiness—especially your happiness; for you, I firmly believe, have a mind too independent and too pious to be at the mercy of extrinsic circumstances for your portion of earthly felicity. Yes, my dear Felicia, whatever you may now think, I flatter myself your happiness is not so entirely in the power of another as you at present imagine; for happiness (real happiness, not that spurious evanescent enjoyment, too often mistaken for this heavenly blessing) depends more on temper than on fortune. Persevere in virtue, cling to the principles in which you were nurtured, and be not apprehensive for the future;—nor think it is so long since I was in your situation, that I can be no judge of your sensations. Every feeling of my heart at that period, is now before

me, and it seems but a moment since my ashy lips and faltering tongue refused to articulate the farewell I wished, yet dreaded to pronounce. While, however, true piety throws a balm over the acutest sufferings, you must carefully perform all those minor duties, and embrace all those lesser pleasures, which are necessary to re-establish your peace of mind, or your sacrifice will be robbed of its lustre, and your resignation of its power to heal. We can all, at times, make great efforts, and are often gifted by nature with noble impulses; but few are capable of following with unceasing energy and undeviating fortitude, the narrow path of self-denial; few, of steadily pursuing the sometimes irksome steps of duty, till habit shall have strewn the rugged road with never-dying flowers.

“We are told that *‘l’inutilité de la vie des femmes, est la première source de leurs désordres,’* and I fear the reproach is not wholly without truth. To this error we are probably particularly prone when under the influence of sorrow; and though I know your natural energy of mind, and superior education, may place you in great measure above this temptation, I earnestly

entreat you to be, more than ever, zealous to employ every hour of your time—more than ever solicitous, to discharge with the minutest fidelity every little duty. You have a strong taste for reading, and though no advocate for what is termed learning in women, I think where abilities are bestowed, the gift was not intended to be thrown away as valueless ; and when the pursuit of knowledge is not permitted to interfere with the avocations of our sex, I am of opinion, that a literary turn may be safely and wisely encouraged, because it renders us independent of amusement from others. But that to which I would chiefly direct your attention, is charity. I know you are innately generous and compassionate. I am, therefore, only anxious to guard you against that supineness which personal disappointment is apt to produce, even in a heart like yours. You may probably also conceive that, in your present situation, you have no opportunity of exercising that active benevolence to which, in any other, you would gladly fly as to a refuge from your corroding reflections ; and your want of ability to confer happiness on many, may suggest itself as a plea for discontinuing those exertions

you were accustomed to make at Leominster. But let us not deceive ourselves by fancying, if our power were more extended, we would then cheerfully exert ourselves, while we neglect the present opportunity. Every station brings with it corresponding obligations; and he alone, who steadily performs those which now claim his attention, has any right to imagine that he would discharge others of more importance. Remember, the widow's mite was acceptable even as the gifts of the wealthy; and that the cup of cold water, given from a right motive, will not pass unrewarded. It is a mistake to suppose that *riches* are essential to *charity*, though he who possesses them may lay up for himself the proudest treasures—for the hand of assistance—the voice of consolation—the smile of patronage—are all equally members of the same blessed family. Lose not, therefore, my dearest friend, in the languor of unavailing regret, those talents with which you have been gifted, and happiness—yes, even happiness, will crown your exertions.

“There is one other trial, to which I fear you are peculiarly liable, that I have omitted to warn you against—it is, the being too much

depressed by the evident contempt in which your sentiments are held, and the dislike they may perhaps ensure you. You must remember we are told by one, unrivalled in his deep knowledge of the human heart, that ‘our good qualities, more than our bad actions, expose us to persecution and hatred;’ and that ‘bad as men are, they dare not appear to be open enemies to virtue: when, therefore, virtue is persecuted, it is represented as counterfeit, or some crime is laid to its charge.’ Those, then, who have a sincere desire after virtue must seek it in its own paths, not in those of the world; and whatever uneasiness or inconvenience may generally arise from diverging from the beaten track, in this instance be assured it will be amply repaid. For oh, Felicia, what comparison is there between the approval of conscience and the applause of mankind?—And oh, what a glorious light will break in upon the darkness of expiring nature, when at its close, we perceive we have no crime to deplore—no glaring error to lament. With what calmness will a soul so supported prepare for that change so terrific to the guilty. Support, therefore, dear Felicia, the sneers or aversion of

those around you, with patience and equanimity—be insensible to their injustice—alive only to the possibility of deserving it.

“I trust it is unnecessary to say, that Mr. Marshington and myself would rejoice to see you, if you could visit us this Spring. You know we are always home birds, therefore come whenever you can prevail on Lady Wyedale to part with you, and believe me you will be received with both pride and pleasure by

“Your sincere

“And affectionate Friend,

“ANNE MARSHINGTON.”

Felicia's understanding assented to the truth of Mrs. Marshington's arguments; but her heart was still too sincerely in Evanmore's possession, to admit the possibility of her ever loving any other. She derived, indeed, a melancholy pleasure in thinking that her remaining unmarried would prove how dearly she had loved him; and tend to exalt those principles which had impelled her to such a sacrifice. It was now the favourite wish of her heart that, though lost to each other in this world, they might meet again in a better—be there united

by holier bands :—her unceasing prayer, that his spirit might be enlightened, and his mind purified from the contagion it had imbibed in the society of her family. But while she revolted, with almost disgust, from the idea of ever calling another, husband, she resolved implicitly to obey Mrs. Marshington's advice on all other points, and by increased diligence and virtue, to adorn the profession she had publicly chosen. Her desire of active employment was soon gratified; for Rosalind, at an assembly where she appeared in a state of almost *nudité*, caught a severe cold, and was confined to her apartment nearly a fortnight. Next to her anxiety for Evanmore's restoration to the path he had quitted, ranked her solicitude for Rosalind's recovery; and though assured that her indisposition was slight, she could not be prevailed upon to leave her room. Rosalind now comprised her all of earthly happiness; and the more she became assured that Rosalind's faults were only those of education, the more she felt induced to love and pity her.

Rosalind usually received her affectionate attentions with many demonstrations of reciprocal regard; but unaccustomed to illness or

confinement, she was so impatient, that her petulant complainings sometimes bordered on those of Lady Wyedale, when in similar circumstances; and Felicia, with a sigh, perceived, that the gay spirits whose hilarity throws an additional brightness over the hour of festive enjoyment, are not the best calculated to bear up against adversity, or to enliven, by their fortitude under suffering, the gloom of a sick chamber.

“You need not be afraid of speaking in your own voice, it is never a very loud one,” said she one morning, when Felicia in the softest accents was asking how she felt. “Nor yet to walk on the whole of your foot. Oh! that tip-toe silence, that caution in shutting a door, is intolerable to those who are not used to it, and reminds one so of a time one naturally dreads to think of.”

“Do not dread to think of it—it must come, and its approach is neither accelerated nor embittered by those means which will divest its arrival of terror or surprise. Dearest Rosalind, embrace the present season of retirement to look into your heart. We cannot elude death, and we must not refuse religion, for death is

not more sure, than judgment—or judgment, than reward or punishment from Him who has said, he will *render unto every one according to his works.*”

Rosalind yawned : she was too fully assured all who thought on such subjects must be Methodists, to pay the smallest attention to this advice, and too sensible of Felicia’s kindness of intention, to say what would give her pain. A long silence followed ; and while Felicia was indulging a secret hope that what she had said might have awakened her sister’s conscience, she was occupied in contriving, in imagination, an elegant carriage costume for her first airing.

“ When do you imagine I shall be well enough to go out ?” she asked, after she thought she had allowed a decent time to elapse between Felicia’s remark and her own question. “ How I shall rejoice to hear the thunders of—”

“ Your dear five hundred friends,” said Felicia, “ whose society you sigh to exchange for mine.”

“ No, not exactly that ; though I own I long to take wing and fly out of this horrid room ; which will give, even me, the blue devils, if I

remain in it much longer—I suppose, however, I must submit to my fate.”

“Acquiesce, dearest Rosalind. The one is involuntary, the other a virtue.”

“These are delicate distinctions, which my dull senses will not enable me to see,” said Rosalind, and—

The dialogue was here interrupted by the entrance of Jenny, who stole into the room to request, that Felicia would permit her to spend the evening with some distant relations, whose humble residence she had at length made out, after an investigation that did equal honour to her heart and perseverance. Felicia readily complied; and she was softly leaving the apartment, when Rosalind said, “Oh! dear, I always forgot to ask you, Jenny, what became of that poor creature who lived near your cousins. She was very ill, you know.”

“She died, Miss,” said Jenny, with a half-toss of her head, unluckily remembering at the moment, that if Felicia had been equally inattentive to her tale, the unhappy woman might have perished from mere poverty.

Rosalind was not, like Felicia, ‘alive to

every want and every woe;' but she was not naturally either unfeeling or selfish. Her's was that induration of the heart, which is often caused by seeing nothing but unbounded affluence—by never having a real personal want ungratified. "Dead!" she repeated, in a tone of surprise and pity; "dear, I am sorry I never thought of her before. I remember my finances were in a deplorable condition at the time, or I would then have assisted her; and had I only recollected her again, I would have contributed something to her aid. But, Felicia, you did not forget her, I am sure? You are so compassionate, you never lose sight of misery till you have tried to relieve it."

"No, Ma'am," said Jenny, her resentment appeased by the concern that Rosalind's face really expressed, and this compliment to her mistress, "and 'twas well Miss Felicia did not, for if she had, she must have been clammed to death."

"Starved!" said Felicia, in an under voice to Rosalind.

"Heavens!" cried Rosalind, who now, herself on the bed of sickness, had leisure to con-

template the sufferings of others. "How very dreadful! Why, how could it be, the parish, you know, were bound to support her. Why did not the people round her go to the parish officers for relief?"

"They did," said Jenny, "but, dear heart a day, three or four shillings a week will not provide a poor body with a house over their heads, as the saying is, and vittals, and doctors stuff, and tendance, o' other poor bodies; who often cannot afford to give even their time away, and firing, and candles, and washing, and every mander of thing besides: so when they've no friends but the parish, though they should be very thankful for that, poor sows, poor folks is sadly off when it pleases God Almighty to bring them to sickness."

Rosalind's heart smote her with a pang before unfelt. Nature had originally inclined her to all the softer feelings of humanity, but they had found no abiding place in the bosom of a fine lady, and had long been dismissed as intrusive unnecessary visitants. This simple picture, however, of the sorrows and hardships of millions of her fellow-creatures, revived

sensations dormant, not wholly extinguished ; and the clouded brow, the pensive face, showed her pity and self-contrition.

“ Poor dear sowl ! she must have died out, and out, and out weeks before, if it had not been for Miss Felicia,” continued Jenny, “ with such a terrible visitation.

“ What was the matter with her ?” said Rosalind, for the first time really interested by a tale of vulgar distress.

“ I don’t know for sartain. At first it was the rheumatics, then the decline, then one thing, and then another, and last, poor sowl, it turned out she had a wolf in her inside.”

“ A wolf !” said Rosalind, half raising herself from the couch on which she was reclining.

“ Yes,” said Jenny, who had lingered that she might have the opportunity of telling the marvellous tale, “ ’twas a sad visitation. A sad visitation !” she repeated, proud of her correct pronunciation of so long a word. “ A sad visitation.”

“ Visitation, indeed !” cried Rosalind, trying to hide with her shawl the merriment that, in spite of her former regret, now convulsed her features.

“The poor creature, a few weeks previous to her dissolution, was seized with an enormous appetite,” said Felicia, who had before heard the wondrous narrative, repressing a smile that she might not offend the compassionate Jenny, “it is a symptom that is often the precursor of death.”

“As sure as you are alive, Ma’am, ’twas a right-down wolf,” said Jenny, eagerly. “Why she eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, but her victuals did her no good, as well they might not.”

“Really, Jenny,” said Rosalind, again raising herself, and fixing her eyes on her face with a look of the deepest surprise and profoundest gravity, “this is a strange story. Are you sure—quite sure? I never heard of such a complaint before.”

Jenny eyed her face before she replied. Its expression was exactly in unison with her own when she first listened to the same account, and without a dread of her ridicule, she exclaimed, “True as I am standing here. Her ravening stomach could no ways else be accounted for: besides she said herself she must have one; and after she was fairly dead, the neigh-

bours all watched by her two hours to see it come out of her. To be sure, they saw nothing; but that was no proof it was not so neither."

"None, certainly," said Rosalind. "Felicia," she cried, turning to her sister, "I remember very well it was about that time my beloved little Dash was seized with that violent desire of food, which got him, you know, into such terrible scrapes with the cook. Depend upon it, the wolf when it left the old woman, took up its quarters with him. Poor dear Dashy! I little thought what a visitation had befallen him."

Jenny changed colour; and almost forgetful of her situation, in her rage at this treacherous take-in, turned upon her insidious betrayer a look of the bitterest indignation. "So, so, Miss Rosalind," she cried, in stifled tones, "I know now what you are after. I'm aware of your gibes, Miss"—she flung towards the door.

"Don't be angry, Jenny," said Rosalind, the couch shaking under her; "uncontrollable laughter is *my* complaint. The wolf shall not escape again; he shall not torment any thing

else, brute or Christian. The moment poor Dashy grows sick, I'll send him to Surgeons'-hall, and after they have done with him, the wolf and he shall figure together in the British Museum."*

Jenny rushed out of the room. To any thing in the shape of a jest she had an insurmountable antipathy; and she could hardly forgive herself, for not having had sagacity enough to see through the artful veil of gravity, which Rosalind had assumed, to make herself and her tale still more absurd. She flew to her room, and there sat burning with resentment, while Felicia, when Rosalind's immoderate bursts of laughter gave a possibility of being heard, remonstrated with her both on the cruelty and impropriety of which she had been guilty, in drawing a simple woman to make herself ridiculous, and forgetful of her station.

"Oh, I forgive her the angry look she bestowed upon me; and as she took her revenge, I hope she will pardon me in turn. So pray,

* This *true* instance of almost incredible superstition and ignorance, is introduced for the purpose of showing how much it is necessary to enlighten the lower orders of society.

my dear Felicia, unbend your Mentorean brow, and laugh with me at this astonishing instance of superstition and ignorance. Who could have believed it possible, that, in the nineteenth century, a woman of eight and twenty, rather superior to the common class of servants in intellect, if not in manners, could have credited so wild a fiction?—in this enlightened age?—a woman, too, brought up by my aunt Beauclerc, who patronized, I hear, every dame's school within twenty miles of her; and thought it her duty to instruct her servants personally! Well, my dear, I think it must a little diminish your faith in the efficacy of education."

"No, not at all," said Felicia; "for Jenny is an excellent woman, but no specimen of the new system. She was educated according to the strictest rules of the old school, and as she did not come to us till she was fourteen or fifteen, although my aunt's admonitions strengthened her principles, her early prejudices continued proof against every effort to dislodge them. It was in vain my aunt tried to reason her out of her fear of ghosts (barghests, as she calls them), and all their long catalogue of attendant horrors; or to weaken her faith in the

lesser chain of improbabilities, by which the greater are held together—as omens, dreams, death-watches, screech-owls, and ravens. She learnt to suppress her belief in their existence, but never subdued it. Her opinions had been formed in the plastic season of infancy, and rivetted, as she advanced in life, by seeing all her relations cherish the same. She is the very child of superstition; and sometimes I have taken my work, in a long winter's evening, into her room, and gradually led the conversation to her favourite topics; for, though before she has got well into the narrative strain on such occasions, she generally shakes at every trivial noise, and scarcely dares, like the little boy in the *Spectator*, to look over her shoulder, she is never happier than when so employed. In addition to these subjects she is also in possession of much curious information, relative to the almost obsolete customs which formerly prevailed in the north of England; and though she would be highly offended if she thought you supposed she gave credit to these idle traditions, yet, I have observed, she never fails to detail, with peculiar solemnity and precision, that it has always

been said in their family, that some great-aunt, or grandmother, I forget which, on her father's side, once fasted the *live-long* day, on Saint Agnes's fast, and at night was rewarded by the Saint for her abstinence, with the visible appearance of her future husband."

"Ring the bell," cried Rosalind, "and tell her to come, and initiate me into all these mysteries immediately. How I shall be amused!"

"Not by any thing Jenny can say," said Felicia, "if I am any physiognomist. I question much, were I to insist upon her communicating her legendary lore, whether she is just now in a frame of mind to render her details very humorous or entertaining, even to you Rosalind; and the fear of your ridicule would, I am sure, prevent her from giving any dramatic effect to her ghost stories. Besides, I am sure you could not keep your countenance, and it would be cruel to insult her any further. You must remember also, Jenny has some great names to support her in these early prejudices. I am, indeed, disposed to think, that an instinctive belief in the existence of supernatural beings is implanted in every bosom, and, as the

strongest proof of it, we have only to recollect that men of the most exemplary piety, and of hardened infidelity, have been equally under the influence of superstition. That great and good man, Dr. Johnson, evidences, in his *Rasselas*, a secret preponderance in favour of this idea. Hobbes, the free-thinker, it is well known, firmly believed in the appearance of ghosts. Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarine were so absurdly superstitious as to employ and pension a pretender to astrology, who actually calculated their nativities; and even Sir Isaac Newton gave implicit credence to dreams of judicial astrology. A splendid author of the present day, has given his indirect testimony in favour of this subject, in the exquisite novels of *Waverly* and *Guy Mannering*. It appears, therefore, a natural defect; and I own I esteem a mind intimidated neither by the vain fears of the ignorant, nor by the presumptuous arrogance of the learned, as the best poised, the least likely to err. And really, Rosalind, I confess myself—but I see you are prepared to laugh at and despise me—I cannot be so severe on this weakness in others, because I am—yes, I unquestionably am, to a certain degree, a proselyte. These

legends seem to unite us yet more firmly to that distant country which is the goal of our hopes and labours here ; to connect us with those supernatural beings who must one day be our only companions ; and I think it is one of the great links fastened on the mind by the singular beauties of Ossian, that we are, while reading it, surrounded by spirits, and in the land of the wildest superstition."

" I never was delighted with Ossian," said Rosalind ; " and I believe you have now unwittingly assigned the reason. I have no ambition to have any thing to do with spirits, or desire the least acquaintance with them before old Charon ferries me over the Styx."

Felicia turned from her in grief. She had just been pleased by the feeling she had evinced while listening to Jenny's tale, and the disappointment she experienced on hearing so flippant a remark, pained her yet more sensibly than it would have done at any other time. She perceived that such bursts of sympathy, or those occasional manifestations on which she delighted to build her hopes of future goodness, appeared rather impromptus than the result of better principles ; and, while she con-

templated the lovely form of Rosalind, as she lay stretched on the sofa, the symmetry of her finely-proportioned limbs, displayed by her loose morning robe, and her beautiful features rendered more interesting by the faded hue of temporary indisposition, tears almost gushed from her eyes at the recollection, how little the mind corresponded with the captivating person.

CHAPTER VI.

“ There is a Winter in my soul,
The Winter of despair !
Oh, when shall Spring its rage repress,
When shall the snowdrop blossom there ?”

THERE is a restlessness in grief, that impels the mourner to hope, that every change of situation and pursuit, may relieve the mind from the weight of misery ; and Felicia, though she had now returned, with something like her pristine pleasure, to the occupations in which she used to take so much delight, still felt a load at her heart, which she hoped a change of scene might, in some degree, remove.

Spring had commenced ; but, for the first time, she saw its opening beauties with no pleasure. The crocus and the hyacinth at the windows of the balcony, and the feeble notes of a captive lark, who now and then

trilled a melancholy broken cadence, as the sun shed a few sickly beams through the bars of his prison, recalled the dear amusements of her youth—reminded her yet more forcibly of the heavy misfortunes which had since shed their gloomy influence over her youthful mind. Her heart was then responsive only to happiness, alive only to the voice of joy, of love. The untried world was before her glittering in all the colours of the rainbow, and she looked forwards without apprehension to the future. Alas! how had the sad realities of life darkened the bright, but illusive vision. Scarcely had a summer's sun passed away, yet the grave had closed over her she then regarded as all but a parent; and she was separated for ever from him she then esteemed all but a husband. The two great links by which man is united to his fellow-mortals were snapped, and could never be, to her, supplied by any other. She wept as these mournful images presented themselves to her imagination, and again she turned with longing eyes towards the period of their departure to the Lodge. Maria Berkely had paid the debt of nature; the family were now recovering from the shock, and she anxiously

wished to offer her personal tribute of esteem to the departed, her meed of sympathy to the living.

But Lady Wyedale was in no hurry to leave town. Rosalind and herself had patched up a peace soon after the *fracas* that followed the avowal of Rosalind's rupture with Mr. Osborne; and, having reasoned herself into a conviction that she had really offered nothing more to Felicia than a home, and, perhaps, a trifling remembrance at her death, her Ladyship began to consider Rosalind with renewed interest: affection would be an improper term for feelings that owed their origin to pride, and their continuance to vanity. Again she saw, in her, the future possessor of rank, wealth, and consequence; and again, Felicia became a mere cypher in that house which she had once almost promised should be her's. But this change gave Felicia no uneasiness. She rather, indeed, rejoiced that it permitted her to spend more time in the privacy of her apartments.

The high tone of mind which Felicia acquired in retirement, and confirmed by reflection, had never, till she came to London, been exposed to the ridicule of those who could not

appreciate her motives, or enter into her feelings: for Mrs. Beauclerc was uniformly consistent; and when she gave her young niece the principles and views of a Christian, she carefully guarded her from the society of those whose opinions might weaken her faith and lower her standard of morality. It was consequently one of the severest trials to which she was subject, that under Lady Wyedale's roof those sentiments were the object of laughter, surprise, or dislike; and she panted to mix once more with persons whose congeniality of ideas might enable her to enjoy again that freedom of conversation, that pleasing interchange of opinions, from which she was debarred. She was sensible that many among Lady Wyedale's acquaintance were not more distinguished for rank than virtue, but they were mere acquaintance, who preserved that polite, but distant courtesy of manner which seemed to say, they wished not a closer intimacy; and timid and delicate, it was repugnant to her feelings to solicit for that personal intercourse which was denied to the rest of the family. It is seldom that what we anxiously wish, we do not endeavour to accomplish, if within those

limits which the prudent and good never overstep ; and after spending some weeks longer in a dreary exchange of cold civilities with Lady Wyedale, Felicia took advantage of her Ladyship's convalescent state, to hint her wish to visit her friend, Mrs. Marshington. Lady Wyedale gave her immediate consent, for the late revolution in her sentiments respecting Rosalind, rendered her not averse to Felicia's occasionally having some other protector ; and Felicia, elated at the prospect of rejoining her friend, wrote to say, she should leave town in a week from the date of her letter. Assured from Mrs. Marshington's tranquil retired habits, that she had no cause to apprehend she might be from home, she immediately began to make preparations for her journey, and on the eve of their completion, had the mortification of learning, in a few hurried lines, from Mr. Marshington, that her friend was confined to her room by a fever, caught in attending upon one of her children. Mr. Marshington lamented extremely that they were necessarily obliged to defer the pleasure of her visit, but expressed his hopes, that, as Mrs. Marshington was declared out of danger,

she might, without risk to herself, join them in a few weeks.

To Felicia this was a severe disappointment; for, in addition to the uneasiness she felt on her friend's account, she had anticipated so much pleasure from a temporary removal, that tears of chagrin stood in her eyes as she laid the letter on the table, and announced the impediment which had arisen to delay her excursion.

"'Tis the more unlucky," said Rosalind, "as Lady Wyedale has just determined not to visit the Lodge again this Summer. You will not, therefore, have even the chance of seeing the Berkelys, unless you feel inclined to make a bold push—I don't mean for a husband—far be it from me to be so slanderous, but to visit *Mrs. Berkely* instead of *Mrs. Marshington*."

"If I had the smallest hope of success, I should not hesitate," said Felicia in an eager voice.

"Well, then, leave the matter to me, and by a little judicious management, I will undertake to bring the higher powers into acquiescence. We are just now on very amicable terms; and I think I can, with a small portion of dexterity,

and a large share of flattery, contrive to cajole the old lady into consent. Old Lady! Mercy on me! Tell it not in Gath. Ye very doors and windows be mute: bear not record of my imprudence: not even my subtlety or consummate contrivance in bending facts to agree with theories, would be able to remove her exasperation did she know it was possible any body could call her—I dare not say what—” She left the room as she spoke, with an air of mock affright, and, after half an hour’s conversation with Lady Wyedale, returned to convey the pleasing information that her Ladyship gave Felicia permission to spend a month or two at Elm-grove.

“How did you bring this about?” said Felicia.

“Why, it required a good deal of finesse; and, after all, not to be disingenuous, I verily believe, she had reasons of her own for acceding to the petition, unknown to me; for she suddenly sounded a retreat from the field of action, and capitulated at the moment I thought she had been collecting her forces to renew the combat. Her motive I am unable to divine, nor is it of any importance that I should: I may have my

suspensions, but I am not obliged to hint them. She has a long head of her own, one of the strongest proofs of which is, that, after living a life with Sir Thomas Wyedale, that is without its parallel in the annals of connubial bliss, she finally prevailed upon him to leave her above three thousand pounds a-year at her own disposal, besides her jointure. I, who love to investigate things to their foundation, from that laudable desire of knowledge, that philosophic spirit of inquiry, which ought to actuate every rational being, could never account for this, after all the labour and trouble I bestowed on the subject, but by supposing she held a pistol to the poor man's head, as we are told the famous Duchess of Kingston did, and so achieved the point, by putting him in bodily fear. And yet I should have imagined the many battles he had lived through, might have given him courage to brave the attack; or at least, that the certainty it would, at all events, free him from her, might not have operated to render the result of his obstinacy less disagreeable. Really, Felicia, her treatment of that unhappy wretch might vie in atrocity with any of the legends of the Newgate Calendar.

Though he had given her rank, consequence, power, and affluence, she did not vouchsafe him in return a single smile that was unbought, nor had gratitude enough to feel even obliged for what he had done for her. Weary of her storms or sullen looks, he scarcely dared to ask a friend to his own table without her consent, and at length relinquished every thing but the empty title of master of his own house, that he might secure to himself a little peace in his own study. So little, indeed, was she sensible of her obligations, that when he once reproached her with her unkindness, she told him she did not esteem herself in the least his debtor; he had not married her to gratify her inclinations, but his own; and, elated with the adulation which she received *as his wife*, was vain enough to imagine it would have been offered to the shrine of her charms, had she remained in her father's parsonage. Well, whatever other faults I may possess, I hope I shall never be base enough to treat with contumely and neglect, the man whose disinterested attachment has induced him to share his more exalted views with me—or infatuated enough to ascribe to my attractions, attentions which are paid,

not to them, but to my husband's rank and affluence."

"Let me hope you will carry your virtue still higher," said Felicia; "and that even should your husband possess neither superior importance, nor a larger fortune than yourself, the recollection that he is your husband, and that you have solemnly bound yourself to love, honour, and obey him, will impel you to treat him with equal regard and respect."

"In the first place, I don't think I run any risk of marrying for love; for I was never sentimental enough to wish to exchange the Serpentine river for purling streams, or St. James's Park for myrtle groves: nor at any period of my life, have I ever aspired to the sylvan honours and rural comforts of a residence in a cottage. In the next, if I should be guilty of such horrid infatuation, the little blind villain who has led me into the snare, will enable me to bear its inconveniences."

"That is by no means certain," said Felicia. "If it were, we should not see so many love-matches, as they are called, by, which is commonly meant hasty, imprudent connexions, turn out so unhappily. And even where young

persons at the commencement are sincerely attached to each other, there must be something more than personal regard to render their attachment lasting. Love, we are told by one of the most distinguished characters of the age, is only one of many passions; and has no great influence upon the sum of life.* Is it, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that when it is unaccompanied by esteem and confidence, and unsupported by novelty, it will lose a part of its power? And even should it be thus attended, it may still be exposed to trials; and in the hour of temptation virtuous principles are the only real security for its continuance. We must know and feel, that it is our duty cheerfully to submit to the ills of this chequered scene, or their bitterness will impregnate even the cup of domestic happiness. We must be *determined* to lighten each other's load from a sense of obligation, or it will be too galling to be borne by love singly."

"'Pon my word, you have favoured me with a fine disquisition on the nature of the tender passion," said Rosalind, yawning; and when-

* Cœlebs.

ever I feel myself in the least danger of committing such a *bêtise*, as falling in love with a poor man, I'll consider the case with more attention."

"The major part of what I have advanced, will be equally applicable should you marry a rich one. And, as we are now on the eve of separating for some time, there is another subject on which I wish to say a few words."

"Not one," cried Rosalind, "as you value my love. On that topic even you must be silent. I will not be dictated to on points of which I only can be the judge."

"I love you too dearly, and I desire your welfare too earnestly, to let even the fear of incurring your temporary displeasure, and temporary I am sure it will be, deter me from candidly stating my apprehensions, that Lord Edgermond is not so much attached to you as to intend making you his wife. I may be mistaken, but his attentions appear to me to be of that vague, indefinite, cautious kind, which from their being easily eluded, men of the world commonly employ in their intercourse with those who possess their admiration, rather than their love. Permit me, then, to entreat you by

all you hold most dear, not to allow either your affections to be irrevocably engaged, or your unsullied honour tarnished by imprudently receiving clandestine attentions, which must be grating to your pride, however gratifying to your heart. Dearest, dearest Rosalind, forgive the anxiety of a sister who has now none to love but—you; and tell me fairly, can he who is free to marry, and yet delays to offer his hand, be sincerely under the influence of genuine affection? Can Lord Edgermond have any really cogent reasons for not openly avowing his attachment, if he feels any towards you; or for that distance and reserve, with which he invariably treats you when in the presence of his family.”

“Assured as I am these inquiries proceed from affection, unpolluted by a grain of Hustleton curiosity, I will then answer them so far as to say, that I have reason to believe he is unwilling to declare himself till Lady Charlotte Edgermond is married.”

“And why?” asked Felicia.

“Why—why—really you are very inquisitive; and that infidel face of yours gives one little encouragement to proceed. Why, because

the fact is, that the Marquis of Wilberton is desirous he should marry her."

"Then, my dearest Rosalind, pause. If by any little coquetry, you entangle his affections, and your own without—"

"Catching him, I shall be grievously disappointed. That was what you were going to say, I presume?"

"No, indeed, I was on the eve of observing, that you might, by indulging the pleasure he receives from flirting with a beautiful girl, and the gratification you derive from his attentions, endanger, if not destroy, the peace of mind of both, without, too, the smallest prospect of being ever united. For under these circumstances, his family will naturally oppose your wishes; and I hope, I believe, my Rosalind has too much good sense, too much proper pride, and too much honour to enter any family that would disdain her."

"Lord Edgermond has no near relations," said Rosalind, haughtily, "and I have already told you, that he is waiting till this cousin of his shall grow weary of his tardiness, and herself break the engagement."

"I cannot think highly of a man who could

act so disingenuous a part as first to provoke a woman to relinquish her claims to his hand, and then meanly shelter himself under the plea of not having been the first to dissolve a connexion, into which he once voluntarily entered."

Rosalind coloured; and Felicia, sensible that unpleasant arguments, too strongly enforced, are rather apt to make an enemy than a proselyte, finished the subject by gently laying her hand on Rosalind's lily arm, as it carelessly rested on her harp, repeating in a low but affectionate voice, "Dearest Rosalind, I will say no more than that I trust you will take care he proves not one of those who

"Palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope."——

"Ergo, that he makes not a fool of me!" said Rosalind.

A pause of some moments followed. Rosalind then tuned her harp, and swept her snowy fingers over its glittering chords; but she was evidently not at ease, and Felicia, unwilling to interrupt the chain of her ideas, preserved silence till she seized a French air, and

began warbling it in a strain of unaffected hilarity, that evinced she had succeeded in banishing her chagrin, at least for the present.

“ Though the readiness with which you seem to forget my admonitions is a little discouraging, said Felicia, leaning over her as she smilingly spoke, “ I cannot leave you without breathing a few more words of entreaty, rather than remonstrance.”

“ What ! have you not emptied your budget of conjectural evils yet ? Come then, exonerate your conscience at once. I know you will be ten times more dolorous, if I refuse you the opportunity. So now for the peroration of your speech, that you may go in peace to Elm-grove.”

“ Thus encouraged, I will venture to express my hopes that you will in future refrain from avowing your opinion of your friends and acquaintance. I heard you the other night say of a young lady, seemingly about nine and twenty or thirty, in reply to a gentleman who said she was very pretty, “ A beauty—*en décadence* ;” and after giving another such a description of Miss Lucretia Beaumont, that he could not fail to see or hear her with derision,

you recommended him to conceal his merit, because she had the pen of a ready writer, though she was not fairer than the children of men, and if offended, would not scruple to bring him head and shoulders into that exquisite *morçeau*, her daily journal, which was exhibited for the edification of the young, and aged, once a month, by her grandmama."

"Very probably I might," said she, with a laugh. Indeed, on reflection, I think I do remember enough to incline me to believe I ought to plead guilty to both these charges. What an exact register dost thou keep of all my enormities! The first I now recollect had a reference to that old flirting, Miss Thornly, who is much nearer forty than I am thirty, and still preserves all the airs of a belle. Now flirting, and that sort of thing, is so intolerable after five and twenty, I think it right to expose such horrid affectation, and pull down her false colours. As to my observations on Miss Lucretia, I own I love to unmask all such vain impostors, and tearing the veil from their lofty pretensions, expose the emptiness of their pates. There is something so provoking yet ludicrous, in seeing ignorance bedizened with the tinsel

of erudition, that I honestly confess, when I am at too great a distance to fear any harm from the explosion, I do like to fire off a little innocent squib or two against petticoat pendants."

"You are not aware how much you expose yourself to their malice by these acts of impotent hostility. Dearest Rosalind, let me implore you for the future to be more guarded. '*On sera ridicule, et je n'oserai rire,*' was the remark of a celebrated French author, and be assured it was founded in wisdom."

"Probably it might be. And in return for your affectionate anxiety on my account, the next time I see an old worn-out coquette with flags of distress flying on her head in the shape of pink ribbons, Spring flowers, &c. &c. &c. or a silly literary daw trying to cover her dull feathers with those of a bird of wisdom, I will shut both my eyes and my mouth."

CHAPTER VII.

I feel this thine endearing love
All through my bosom: thou art as a dove,
Trembling its closed eyes, and sleeked wings
About me ; and the pearliest dew not brings
Such morning incense from the fields of May,
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
From those kind eyes.——

Keates.

FELICIA's letter to Miss Berkely, saying that if convenient to her mother, she should be happy to spend a few weeks at Elm-grove, was immediately answered by Mrs. Berkely, who requested her, in the most affectionate terms, to make such arrangements ere she left town, as would enable her to spend the major part of the summer with them. Felicia felt much gratified by the kindness and strong expressions of regard in which Mrs. Berkely's invitation was couched ; and secretly determined

that she would prolong her visit beyond a few weeks, if possible, resumed the little arrangements she had been previously making for her journey into Leicestershire, with fresh avidity. She was aware, notwithstanding Mr. Marshington's assurances to the contrary, that her friend could not, for a long period, be sufficiently a convalescent, to render the society of a visitor really acceptable, and as she had a sister of Mr. Marshington's residing with her, she could not hope to be of the least personal use during her recovery. She therefore intended to postpone the pleasure of waiting upon her till the Autumn, and consequently felt additionally delighted at the prospect of spending a considerable period with the Berkelys.

Unwilling to leave Jenny exposed during her absence to both the unkindness of her fellow-servants, and the contagion of their society, Felicia had already secured her an asylum with her relations, who were very respectable people, and after again warning her against the temptations of a residence in London, she retired to her apartment at an early hour, that she might be in readiness, to commence her excursion at seven the next morning.

"How delighted you look, Philly!" said Rosalind, who had risen to make her breakfast.

"I own I feel no uneasiness at the idea of quitting London, but that which springs from leaving you."

"And that will soon wear off, when in the society of the Berkelys," said she, archly.

"Oh, no, no! the Berkelys, much as I love them, taken in a body, are not half so dear to me as this," and she fondly kissed the ivory hand that was playfully held up as if in the act of prophesying.

Rosalind was suddenly affected, and a tear dimming the liquid radiance of her clear dark eye, added ten-fold interest to her lovely features; but it was only for the moment. She was ashamed of any thing like sentiment, and dashing away the unbidden stranger, she said with a sly smile, "I wish you joy not only of the change in your situation, my dear, but the information and pleasure you are likely to receive during your residence at Elm-grove. Berkely has taken a part of his estate into his own hands, and become a great farmer. Think, therefore, what a new turn will be given to your ideas. Dissertations on tolls and turn-

piques, poor-rates and distrains, improvements and alterations, will be a delightful exchange for dialogues on balls and concerts, parties and *conversazioni*; while speculations on the decline and fall of agriculture, on the comparative merits of salt, sugar-scum, bone-dust, &c. &c. mingled with practical experiments on the advantages to be derived from the cultivation of fiorin, mangel-wurzel, and ruta бага, will agreeably contrast with the dull conjectures and stupid occupations of the fashionable world."

"Where did you pick up this technical jargon?" cried Felicia, laughing.

"Jargon, truly!" said Rosalind. "Lightly as you may esteem my knowledge on such subjects, it is all that my instructress Miss Lucretia Beaumont acquired during a six months residence in a farm-house, where she went after an indisposition, brought on by intense study, as her grandmama said to all inquiring friends. I happened at that time to have an eye on your swain in perspective, and as it is always well to *appear* interested in a man's pleasures and pursuits (a word to the

wise, Philly), I was at the trouble of becoming for a short time her pupil.”

“And do her so much credit, that really a few more lessons would make you a rival instead of a scholar, and she might become jealous of you.”

“Oh, no! for to be jealous, one must have a fear of inferiority, and that is a sensation she could never feel, so firmly is she intrenched in her own good opinion. Nor in truth would she have any reason, for though she has few brains, and little learning, she has great perseverance, with a large share of knack to overbalance her ignorance, and that does just as well with the majority of mankind. Jealous of me! Oh, no; for while she is the merest empty pretender that ever existed, she is in her own estimation a Minerva—has a brilliant understanding, a cultivated mind, a graceful person, a striking physiognomy, refined manners; and this she will persist in believing, in defiance of the continual sneers and laughter of her acquaintance. I, for one, spared no pains to open her eyes directly and indirectly. till I found she was invulnerable. You can’t imagine how I exerted myself for her good:

I interrupted her in the midst of her finest tirades. I begged her to repeat such and such sentences over and over again, for, indeed, I could not understand them; and when she had complied, still preserved a countenance of unenlightened vacuity. But all would not do. She was long insensible, even to my endeavours, and then ascribing them to malice and envy, remained even more firmly rooted in the conviction, that she was the most distinguished of her sex. She has, in short, a sovereign specific against all such attacks, and it is vanity, vanity, vanity !!!”

And Rosalind looked in an opposite mirror as she spoke, with an air at once so surprised at her friend's folly, and so satisfied with the perfection of her own person, that Felicia could scarcely repress the smile that hovered over her lips, at this proof how ready we all are to pull the mote from our brother's eye, without perceiving the beam that is in our own. Rosalind and Lucretia pursued different paths, but each was as anxious to reach the Temple of Fame, and delighted with self, as the other.

“No,” continued Rosalind, still viewing herself with increasing complacency, “the

only returns I received for my efforts to help her to a little self-knowledge, the single subject with which she is entirely unacquainted, were two or three insolent looks, and a large portion of secret dislike."

"The rewards that are generally adjudged to those who take pains to give us gratuitous information on unpleasant topics," said Felicia. "For though we can sometimes bear to speak of our own faults, few are possessed of sufficient real humility, to endure the idea that they are so glaring as to excite the observation of others; or are endowed with enough equanimity of mind to view without aversion those who not only evidently see our foibles with pleasure, but try to make us ridiculous."

"Thank you, Philly" (with a low courtesy); "that sly rap on the knuckles has effaced the kiss you were so civil as to give me just now on the same place."

"I hope not, darling Rosa, as I used to call you in our infant days, and the name is still dear to me; believe me, the one was as much the result of love as the other."

Rosalind shook her head, but the smile that

accompanied this incredulous motion, was that of confiding attachment.

Lady Wyedale's carriage now drove to the door; and after fondly pressing Rosalind to her beating heart, Felicia hurried into it to hide the tears, that, in defiance of her wish, burst from her eyes, at parting, even for a few months, with this beloved sister. As the carriage rolled through the dusky, half-peopled streets, Felicia felt almost sorry that she had left Rosalind. "Yet why should I lament that for a few months only we shall be separated?" She mentally reasoned, "Rosalind, dearly as I know she loves me, would not, alas! be guided by my advice. Oh! had I perceived that I possessed the least real influence over her mind, never, never, would I have quitted her for a moment. Perhaps, when I am away she may be more convinced of its tendency to promote her welfare; and as we dwell with increased regard on the maxims of those from whom we are torn apart by death, so Rosalind may pay to the counsels of an absent sister, that attention her pride would forbid her to grant while present."

Cheered by this hope, her drooping spirits

recovered their usual buoyancy, and letting down the glasses of the carriage to admit the enlivening breeze of morning, she contemplated her approaching visit with increased satisfaction.

The heavy dense atmosphere in which, so often the precursor of a sultry day, was now dispersed by the glowing rays of the sun. Already the lovely hand of Spring had mantled the trees in her fascinating livery, and sprinkled every field with her welcome flowers. The rich bunches of the lilac, clustering with laburnum's golden tresses, every where met her delighted gaze; and her eye was never weary of watching the varying forms of the dazzling clouds as they sailed through the serene vault of heaven, or gracefully undulating over the distant hills, blended them with the deep azure of the sky: her ear, never tired of listening to the melody of the lark and thrush, as their broken notes mingled with the passing breeze.

Elm-grove was little more than fifty miles from London; but as she had experienced some of those little difficulties which, even now in this age of general accommodation and luxury, sometimes attend a traveller, it was

nearly eight o'clock ere she entered the village in which was situated the mansion of her friends. The gorgeous sun-set was dissolved, and a still serene evening had succeeded to its departed glory. The grey vapours of twilight were slowly stealing among the yet faintly illumined clouds, and deeper shades began to curtain the many tints which enlivened the distant objects. The tops of the hills were fading into irregular forms, and the woods that encircled the venerable residence of the Berkelys, had assumed a darkly solemn hue as the carriage approached the avenue that led to the principal entrance.

At the extremity of a long vista of ancient elms, limes, and sycamores, among the fibres of whose antique roots were scattered in gay disorder the cowslip, daisy, harebell, and primrose, she obtained a full view of the house, and through an opening in the shrubbery, which encircled it, a peep at the village beyond. It was a large antique building, to which the hand of modern taste had added little of decoration, but much of comfort; for though the windows retained their pristine form, the narrow panes of our forefathers had given way to others of larger dimensions. The heavy portico in front

was ornamented with a profusion of beautiful exotics : the lawn was smooth as the bowling-green, now becoming so obsolete ; and on the tranquil waters of a small, but clear lake at its foot, was a pleasure-boat, gaily trimmed and decorated. The white walls of the village, their dazzling light, shaded by the clambering woodbine or rose, and their latticed casements flashing bright with the ruddy glow of the evening fire, formed a striking contrast to the sombre beauties of the scene ; while dimly, in the dewy light of evening, arose in solemn grandeur the castellated tower of the village church.

The carriage stopped while Felicia's eye was bent with silent admiration on this lovely picture, and in a moment Mr. Berkely appeared at the hall-door.

“ We had almost given you up, my dear Madam,” he said, as he assisted her to alight. “ And—but here is my sister.” Miss Berkely affectionately kissed her, and after stating the trifling delays which had retarded her reaching the Grove before, Felicia followed her into a large wainscotted apartment, where sat Mrs. Berkely, her daughter, and second son, whose

resemblance to his brother immediately interested her in his favour. Mrs. Berkely received her with the affection of a parent, and though a tear arose to the eyes of each, as memory recalled to their recollection that Evanmore and Maria had both been lost since they last met, the struggle to repress their mutual regret was soon over.

It is, indeed, seldom that a well-regulated mind, however under the influence of calamity, cannot so far control its emotions, as to prevent their ebullitions from destroying the harmony of general society.

The tea equipage was immediately introduced;

“ And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Threw up a steamy column,”

Felicia surveyed the apartment with mingled surprise and pleasure. Every thing that could gratify a refined taste, or contribute towards the comfort of the social hour, was there to be found. But, excepting a few exquisite old paintings, nothing bore the least remembrance to the residence she had left. The Grecian couches, Ottoman stools, and gilded finery of Lady Wyedale's drawing-room were here sup-

plied by easy chairs and sofas of English shape and manufactory. The curtains, of plain crimson moreen, enlivened the dark shining oak floor, and richly carved walls, on whose high polish the cheerful beams of a glowing fire shed a bright and golden tinge. A few valuable china jars were filled with flowers. A harp and piano, together with a small collection of chosen books, and Mr. Berkely's cabinet of coins and fossils, completed its furniture and decorations.

"You are surprised at the obsolete style of this apartment," said Mrs. Berkely, as she followed the glance of Felicia's eye; "but I have never been able to make the slightest alteration in its appearance; for it was fitted up just after my marriage, and possesses a something of sacredness in my eyes. When, however, Berkely marries, I shall cheerfully submit to see it rendered more on a par with those of our friends."

"Indeed, my dear mother, your feelings will never be called upon to sustain so severe a trial," said he, with a smile. "When I marry, my wife shall have unlimited dominion over all the rest of the house, but this room is

as dear to me as to you. With it is associated the remembrance of all my infant joys, and the scarcely less pleasing amusements of more advanced life. Here I remember you taught me to read, and the only punishment I can recollect was banishment from its delights. Here, therefore, I must reign paramount, for I should esteem the removal of a fire-screen little less than the loss of an early friend."

Mrs. Berkely smiled; but it was not the smile of mere gaiety; and Felicia scarcely knew whether most to admire the filial love of the son, or the maternal wisdom and affection which had been its origin.

At an early hour they separated, and after a night of unruffled slumber, Felicia rejoined the family in better spirits than she had felt since her separation from Evanmore.

"You must consider yourself at home, my dear Miss Leycester," said Mrs. Berkely, when the party were about to separate after breakfast, "and without reference to our employments, pursue your own. A certain degree of independence in each is requisite to unite the family chain more firmly; and the late change in your situation makes me esteem you so

much more closely united to us. I shall lament to see you restrained, lest it may be a proof that you feel not for us the sentiments we all cherish towards you."

This was the only allusion Mrs. Berkely made to the dissolution of her engagement with Evanmore, of which she had early learnt from Miss Berkely; and grateful for her affection and delicacy, Felicia promised to consider Elm-grove her home during her visit there.

CHAPTER VIII.

How various his employments, whom the world
Calls idle; and who justly, in return,
Esteems that busy world an idler too !
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoy'd at home,
And Nature in her cultivated trim
Dress'd to his taste, inviting him abroad.

Cowper.

“ LIFE,” it has been justly observed by one of the best and wisest of men, “ consists not in a series of illustrious actions, but in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniences, in the procurement of petty pleasures; and we are well or ill at ease, as the main stream of life glides on smoothly, or is ruffled by small and frequent interruption.”* Under the hospitable roof of Mrs.

* Dr. Johnson.

Berkely, Felicia experienced the truth of these admirable remarks. The society of which she was now a member seemed not distinguished by particular talent, or splendid instances of dazzling virtue; but every thing that passed received the stamp of value and interest from the sympathy and affection that united the little circle; and there was an unrestrained gaiety, a confiding faith in each other, in this house, which forcibly struck her, from its contrast to Lady Wyedale's. Aware, in defiance of self-love, and continual efforts to drown the voice of conscience, she had few real claims to the love or esteem of her household, it was her Ladyship's secret wish, and continual attempt, to set every member of it at variance with the rest, to preclude the possibility of such an interchange of sentiments as might tend to acquaint them yet more with the peculiarities of her temper and character. Hume has observed of King John, that it was the fate of that monarch to render those the enemies of himself, whom he tried to make the enemies of each other; and as the same punishment usually awaits the same offence, Lady Wyedale, notwithstanding her exertions, succeeded to such a

degree, that every thing like confidence was utterly banished from her mansion; she was herself a much greater object of dislike and distrust among her servants, than even her favourite maid—a personage held in wonderful estimation by all the establishment, from the indiscreet Rosalind to the poor parish apprentice, whose hard destiny it was, to become for fourteen years, the property of such a woman. “There are a certain class of people, who are incapable of generous confidence in their equals, but who are disposed to yield implicit credit to the underhand information of mean emissaries.” And to this class Lady Wyedale belonged. She was not, indeed, an indigenous plant, whose properties are known only to one country or one circle. Ill-humour, the idle suspicions, and unamiable propensities of an undisciplined heart and understanding, are unhappily too common to all nations and all ages. While, therefore, she was a stranger to the refined happiness which flows from the mutual unreserve of equals, and the reciprocal interchange of sentiments with those in her own rank, she would occasionally condescend to the meanness of questioning a servant: be

guilty of the impropriety of learning as a secret, the petty details of her own family. Mrs. Norton was consequently an object of equal terror and respect to her colleagues ; and though not an ill-disposed woman, she found it so essential to her own importance with her lady, that she should appear to be on bad terms with them, that she often reported little offences she would otherwise have kept back.

Violent measures are generally resorted to by those who have neither temper nor understanding to devise any other, to accomplish a favourite or necessary end. In her Ladyship's house, therefore, every order was issued in the form of a threat ; every trifling error or neglect treated as though it emanated from a determined disposition on the part of the offender to thwart or disobey the ruling powers ; and, however circumstances might prove the impropriety and impolicy of her measures, her Ladyship manfully determined to adhere to them with an heroic disregard to consequences. The future tense, her favourite rule of grammar, was her usual vehicle of expression ; and the words "*I will*," and "*you shall*," constituted, in her opinion, the whole arcanum of govern-

ment. Yet, while such was the system on which she acted, from a conviction of its sovereign efficacy, with that strange inconsistency which sometimes attends a quick, but not solid mind, Lady Wyedale always secretly esteemed and liked those persons the most highly who opposed her oppressive government, provided they, at length, submitted to its despotism. Conscious that she had never tried to conciliate, or borne with an offence, but she had a sinister motive for her conduct, she always suspected the integrity of those whose natural mildness of character impelled them to endure her storms in silence, or whose treatment of those under them was more distinguished for gentleness than severity. Thus in the complaints of her farmers, she fancied she perceived the upright dealing of her agent: in the tears of the apprentice, a proof that the footman was making him perform the menial offices of his station. Those who spoke without doubt were sure to be listened to without distrust; therefore, vehement assertions of rectitude, clamorous protestations of innocence, and arrogant assumptions of ability, after she had been accusing any member of her household of

crime or incompetency, had always more weight with her than the calm denial, the temperate vindication, or modest diffidence, which are so frequently the characteristics of real probity and merit. She judged, in short, from her own principles, and could consequently form no right estimate of the workings of an upright, honourable, humble heart.

“How different,” thought Felicia, as she unconsciously contrasted them together, “is Mrs. Berkely. She could never be more loved or admired when in the zenith of her charms than now, when her forehead is shaded by the silvery hairs of age. There is a something in your mother, that, in addition to the respect which must be felt for her, imperceptibly attracts the *bienveillance* of all around her,” said she, one day, while walking in the garden with Miss Berkely, and her sister.

“There is, indeed,” she replied, “and I doubt not you love and esteem her now; but as yet, you know not half her perfections. When you are better acquainted, you will love her even almost as we do. That we are indebted to her for our being is the least claim she has upon our gratitude. She has been

more than a mother to us. She has been our friend, instructress, and guide. In our little difficulties and distresses she taught us, when children, to fly to her for assistance and consolation, and we still continue the delightful custom. When my mother first proposed to undertake the arduous task of education, many of her friends thought she could not devote the requisite time to us consistently with her other duties ; but they knew not what regularity and zeal can effect. She was an early riser, and being unrivalled in domestic management, all her household affairs were arranged before breakfast. From nine to one she passed uninterruptedly in the school-room ; after that period she was at liberty to pay or receive visits ; and when not engaged with my father, or obliged to mingle in society, the rest of the day was likewise passed with us ; for in the evening we brought our work into the drawing-room, and listened either to her conversation, or to some book which she generally read aloud for our amusement. These were some of the benefits she conferred upon us in infancy : in more advanced age, she continued equally our firm friend. My father's paternal estate, I

doubt not you have heard, was a little impaired by my grandfather's profuseness; and my father, willing to place John upon a footing with his ancestors, proposed to leave us only two thousand each; but my mother resolutely opposed this unequal distribution of his property. Though devotedly attached to my brothers, she contended, that our claims were even stronger than theirs. They could, she said, embark with honour in genteel professions, if he had it not in his power to render them independent; but custom forbade women to engage in the pursuit of fortune, without a resignation of their station in society. She declared it would be cruel to give us, with the feelings, ideas, and wants of gentlewomen, a sum inadequate to support, even with the strictest economy, our rank as his daughters. She proposed various retrenchments in the establishment, and nobly insisted upon relinquishing the carriage, though a luxury to which she had been accustomed from her birth. We have heard of jealousy between mothers and their daughters, but heard it with amazement. My mother idolized all her family; but her daughters, she said, she considered her peculiar

care. Our only source of uneasiness arose from the constant recurrence of acts of generosity and kindness, for which we could never make any return. From infancy we learnt to regard her as our surest, firmest friend. Even now I recall with pain the anguish we used in our childhood to feel, when she paid an autumnal visit to my grandmother. Her visit was limited to a month, for she has often declared she thought it highly injudicious and wrong in married women to make long absences from home. And indeed, dear Miss Leycester, I have often wondered at that being proposed as a specific to revive declining affection in the married breast, which all admit to be dangerous to the lover: nor can see on what just ground that severe trial, which so often proves the death of youthful affection, should be the renewer of attachment between persons who must necessarily be divested of those hopes and fears which are supposed to keep alive the passion, in its earliest warmest stage. But this is a subject on which, I own, I am not competent to speak," said she, a sweet blush suffusing her face. "Where was I before this digression?"

“ You were saying, what grief we felt when our beloved mother left us,” said Emily. “ And I remember well, how we used to watch, with tearful eyes, the carriage, till it was hidden by the avenue, and then go and weep alone in our apartment, for she used to entreat us to restrain our sorrow, lest our father might fear we did not love him so well.”

“ Yes,” resumed Miss Berkely, “ in every act she was consistent. Never shall I forget the day that I attained my seventeenth year. She had been accustomed, on each return of our birth day, to make us some trifling present. On that morning she walked into my room, and opening three little parcels, desired me to take my choice. They contained all her trinkets, excepting my father’s portrait, and her watch. ‘ I have now done with ornaments, dear Mary,’ said she. ‘ In the language of the noble Roman matron, I can say, with truth, my children are my jewels. You are entering into life; and though I esteem such additions to the dress perfectly unnecessary, yet, as the liberality of my mother and husband have conferred them upon me, and custom authorizes young persons in your sphere to wear

these baubles, I beg you will choose which of these packets you like best. I have divided them, to the best of my judgment, evenly. You are my oldest darling, make, therefore, your selection.' I entreated her to continue to wear what so well became her, but she refused, saying, 'I have long been indifferent to my appearance, excepting so far as is consistent with my rank in society, and my desire to remain pleasing to your father. He will not think me less agreeable without ornaments which he will see worn by his daughters. I don't know, indeed, that in thus resigning these gems, I am so disinterested as you imagine: I believe the wish to gratify him more than influenced this trivial sacrifice to you.' Dear Miss Leycester," she continued, dashing away a rising tear, "this was only one of the many delicate marks that evinced the sincerity of her love for us. We were receiving such hourly, and they can only be considered as the light graceful ornaments that deck a Corinthian pillar, and add to its beauty and elegance, without increasing its real strength or durability."

Mrs. Berkely, leaning on the arm of her eldest son, now joined them, and Felicia con-

templated with increased sensations of love and reverence, the exalted woman whose virtues had been the subject of such a panegyric from a child. "Well might she be the chosen friend of my aunt!" she thought; and as her eye rested on her face, it appeared invested with more than mortal beauty. But it was the mind, the soul, that thus irradiated the features. Mrs. Berkely bore no traces of ever having possessed the dangerous gift of beauty: yet enough to excite interest; and there was a gentle expression in her mild intelligent eye, that secured its continuance. A groupe of healthy boys and girls, all apparently under ten and eleven, with hoes, rakes, wheelbarrows, and spades, suddenly interrupted Felicia's meditations, and drawing up before the party with many rustic bows, and courtesies, requested to be told where they had best begin.

"These are our gardeners," said Mr. Berkely, as his mother and sisters left them, to direct these little children of industry, "and you will perhaps be surprised to learn, that, with the assistance they receive from an old servant and ourselves, they contrive to keep the grounds in the nice state in which you see

them. He looked round him with proud satisfaction as he spoke; but it was the pride which a good man feels, in contemplating the exertions of those whom he has trained to the habits of virtue, and industry.

Felicia expressed her surprise that she had not sooner noticed them.

“They have not been here since your arrival,” he replied. “We always excuse them during the hay and harvest seasons, that they may assist their parents. The former is now over, and they will remain with us till the latter commences. A few years ago,” he continued, “we thought this would be the best mode of employing the younger children of our poor neighbours, till they became strong enough to do something more profitable; and time has strengthened our prepossession in its favour. They are thus gradually trained from their earliest infancy to labour; and as we proportion their reward according to their diligence and attention, they learn to be industrious from a feeling of emulation. Thus habituated to acquire their own support, and depend on their own exertions, they find the duties of their more advanced age less irksome. We hope,

too, that this mode of educating them to perform the necessary avocations of their humble sphere, may engender habits of economy and virtue; for we require them to attend our little school an hour every day, and deduct a few pence weekly from their earnings towards the purchase of clothes, or any other necessary article. They are likewise encouraged to augment this fund by a little donation from ourselves, in proportion to the sum accumulated. Towards the aged we adopt a different system. They are provided with light work, encouraged to take care of the infants of their younger neighbours, during their absences from home, and, in short, perform all those little offices of kindness, which, like the cup of cold water, given in charity, will not go unaccompanied by a blessing."

"These are, indeed, well-founded sources for that cheerfulness I have so often remarked in both your dependants and your family," said Felicia; "and my only regret arises from the consciousness that so few are thus able to confer extensive happiness on those around them."

"Little more than the will, and a firm determination to persevere a short time, is neces-

sary," said he, modestly. "My young labourers do not, altogether, receive more than the wages of a clever gardener, and with the assistance I before mentioned, they perform quite as well. Believe me, a little *personal attention* and *steady inclination*, are the chief requisites necessary to better the condition of the poor; and my sisters unite with me most cordially in all my exertions to promote so desirable an end."

"Your sisters are, I perceive, quite botanists," said Felicia, seeing Miss Berkely at that moment busy in instructing a little boy how to remove some bulbous roots which had done flowering.

"They are as much so as I wish them to be," said he, smiling. "Yet their knowledge extends little beyond an acquaintance with the names and properties of most common flowers, and a sufficient degree of practical skill as gardeners to cultivate such as may be ornamental and beneficial. With the minutiae of the science, or classification of the different species, they are unacquainted, and I do not wish to remove their ignorance. I consider gardening, however, so elegant an amusement,

and so necessary a one for ladies who reside in the country, that I esteem the exertions of a most distinguished author to recommend it, in her admirable work of *Cœlebs*, not one of the least of its many merits."

Felicia involuntarily started. Such were the sentiments of Evanmore, when they perused it together; and, reminded by this trifling circumstance of the great and unhappy change which he avowed had since taken place in his opinions, she formed an excuse for leaving Mr. Berkely, that she might indulge a few moments of sorrow in her own apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

Ah ! that hallow'd form is ne'er forgot
Which first love traced ;
Still it lingering haunts the greenest spot
On Memory's waste.
'Twas odour fled,
As soon, as soon as shed,
'Twas Morning's winged dream !
'Twas a light that ne'er can shine again
On life's dull stream.
Oh ! 'twas light that ne'er can shine again
On life's dull stream.

Moorc.

THOUGH Felicia constantly endeavoured to regard Evanmore as a stranger, and exerted every power of her mind to reconcile herself to the idea, her efforts had not hitherto been crowned with the success she desired. Evanmore, in defiance of her attempts to banish him from her heart, remained there so firmly intrenched, that his image was continually

present to her imagination ; and the sudden thrill of anguish that shot through her soul when any trivial event occurred to revive the remembrance of his alienation, betrayed that she could not yet teach herself to think with composure on their separation. For Felicia, alive to all her other weaknesses, and shrinking from the possibility of doing wrong, unconsciously nourished those feelings she thought herself hourly seeking to subdue. She was ignorant that her daily prayers for his mind to be enlightened, and his happiness preserved, fixed the remembrance of him more firmly in her bosom ; or that when she fancied she should never more feel sorrow, assured he had become all she wished, she instinctively thought he would then once more solicit a hand she should no longer fear to give him : nor let this error of a youthful mind be too severely censured. Felicia was one, among many others, to whom the secret workings and springs of the human heart are too often hidden by the deceitfulness of its nature. His instant flight into the country, his parting message, which Jenny had delivered with all due emphasis and expression, together with his continued re-

sidence at Alverstone, which she casually learnt from a lady who knew something of his family connexions, every day confirmed these feelings; and, while openly striving to conceal her reviving hopes from herself, she secretly admitted the treacherous idea, that Evanmore had not yet parted with her to meet no more. Unconsciously cheered by this insidious prospect, her spirits imperceptibly began to recover their former equable tone; and delighted with the change in her person and manners, Mrs. Berkely insisted on the prolongation of her visit. "The harvest season is just commenced," said she, when Felicia, apprehensive of intruding, was delicately urging the necessity of her return to town, "and you must not leave us at such a period of bustle and usefulness. John, you know, farms a part of his estate, and we all have consequently the feelings of farmers. His happiness and pursuits are indeed so identified with ours, that we take a deep interest in what we should otherwise probably regard with perfect indifference."

"I do not wonder at your attachment," said Felicia, a glow of enthusiasm mantling on her cheek as she spoke. "Who, indeed, can live

with him, and remain uninterested in his occupations, or insensible to his worth. Every other charm may be withstood, but benevolence like his, is irresistible. Besides, I consider husbandry one of the most noble, interesting employments of man. It was that designed him by Heaven in his days of happiness and innocence; and surely none can ever be better calculated to preserve the mind from error and temptation—awaken its best feelings—excite its purest pleasures. When we lift up our eyes and see the trees loaded with fruit, the fields covered with corn, the gardens brilliant with flowers—when we hear the matin song of the lark, and the evening melody of the blackbird—when we see thousands of cattle given for our use,—the heart instinctively raises itself to Omnipotence, and, ‘ Lord, what is man, that ‘ thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, ‘ that thou so regardest him?’ naturally bursts to the grateful lips.”

“ Then you will not be shocked or disgusted at Berkely’s vulgarity, should you by chance see him in the corn-fields assisting in pouring out ale for the reapers,” said Miss Berkely, laughing.

“ Oh, no ! I have not, fortunately, the smallest particle of a fine lady in my composition ; and as my dear friend here kindly insists upon my remaining at Elm-grove till this important season is over, I am determined upon making myself useful. I beg, therefore, you will refrain from mirth, should you, on such an occasion, see me employed in aiding Mr. Berkely.”

“ Berkely !” cried his sister, as he then entered the room. “ Miss Leycester has just been announcing her intention of aiding you in your exertions to render your reapers happy.”

“ Oh ! that she would !” he said earnestly. “ But I fear not.”

“ Indeed I will,” cried Felicia, with the utmost simplicity. “ I will not be the only indolent, uninterested person in the family, I assure you.”

He walked to a window in silence ; and while Felicia, unconscious that she had both awakened and depressed hope at the same moment, continued to question Miss Berkely as to the customs observed on such occasions, he remained pensively leaning against the window-frame, till he was roused from his reverie by

the entrance of a servant, who presented Felicia with a letter from Rosalind.

Rosalind was a lively, but indolent correspondent ; and though Felicia had written constantly every week since her departure, she had only found leisure to answer her letters twice, and then in so much haste, that she had done little more than inform her Lady Wyedale still remained in town. Her present communication was of a more voluminous nature, and Felicia, opening it with pleasure, read as follows :—

“ From the style of your last effusion, dear Philly, I perceive you think me most grievously absorbed in the pomps and vanities of this wicked world ; and to convince you I really am not such a victim to them as you imagine, I will spin out this letter to the length of those dear, delightful epistles, which usually pass between boarding-school misses, when the pleasure of writing nonsense is augmented by its being a forbidden enjoyment.

“ When I reflect on the contents of your last letter, even I, albeit unused to moralizing, can hardly forbear drawing a comment between the

difference of our employments, not very favourable to myself. While you are, it seems, so occupied in assisting the Miss Berkelys to reform their neighbours, diversified by a little herbalizing and sentimentalizing, with the delectable John, that the day is too short for your avocations; I am, it must be confessed, sadly at a loss how to get through it. Notwithstanding all my entreaties and hurricanes, Lady Wyedale will not leave London, though it was never known within the memory of man to be such a desert. Every body gone! I see at this remark your demure features relaxing into a smile, and I almost fancy I hear your soft interrogation of 'every body, Rosalind?' Yes, I reply, every body, and I will prove the fact. In the first place, then, every body keeps a carriage, or at least a man servant in a smart livery. (I don't include in the every-bodies, those who merely retain a little bob-tailed lad, as I once heard your Jenny call Lady Wyedale's parish apprentice, those little apologies for men with hats laced at their ears, exciting, by their consequential self-important strut, the envy, yet derision of all the dirty boys and girls in the street). Those, therefore, who

have neither convenience, are to all intents and purposes nobodies. Don't stare, this is no bad definition: the line must be drawn somewhere, and I assure you, as the strongest mark of its wisdom, when the nobodies do sometimes poke their heads into the society of the somebodies, they have always reason to repent their temerity sooner or later. Well, to revert after this digression to auntie Wyedale, if consistency be a virtue, she does possess that one solitary grace: she remains the same, presenting an eternal transition from fair to stormy, from cloudy to sunshine. She has promised to visit Brighton again in the course of a few weeks; but her word unhappily is so little to be relied upon, that I scarcely permit myself to anticipate so desirable a change in my situation. Since I wrote last, I have scarcely been to half a dozen places worth mentioning; it has, however, been my fate to encounter my late adorer and his cousin. The former tried to appear scornful and indifferent with all his might, and the latter looked a furious malignant, without the smallest personal effort. At the instant I met them, Mrs. Hustleton was in the act of communicating to her

kind friend, dear Mrs. Swallowwell, that she had been to pay a wedding visit to young Stockman and his wife—they have five times her fortune, and, sinking two-and-twentieth cousins, have five times as many genteel relations; but of these facts she either is, or chooses to be ignorant; for she was relating, with wonderful self-complacency, that though she knew very little about them, she had resolved to call, because she thought it would please the young people. Poor things, if such a circumstance could afford them gratification, I am sure it would have been cruel in her to deprive them of the pleasure. The compliments she received from Mrs. Swallowwell on her goodness of heart, condescension, &c. &c. had elevated her vanity and her spirits, beyond their usual pitch; and she was recounting, that, when last at the house of a particular friend of her's, a nobleman in the neighbourhood of Chester, she always found six wax candles lighted up in her bed-room at night, together with a vast number of Baron-Munchausen additions, calculated to place her consequence and his in a more conspicuous light to her gaping acquaintance, when she saw me listening, as harmless as a dove. Her face instantly

changed from its self-satisfied, designing expression, into that of a fury ; and tossing her head as she seized Osborne's arm, walked with affected dignity from the place where she stood. I was not sorry to escape this Scylla and Charybdis so quietly, and in the course of the evening I had a delightful treat, for I sat an hour with Miss Beaumont, who was unusually delightful. She is learning chymistry, I rather think, in consequence of the introduction of gas-lights into the metropolis ; and hydrogen and oxygen, fixed air, muriatic acid, and the like, have usurped the place, as she told me, "of severer studies." At first, she looked very shy at me ; but it suited my convenience to coax her into good-humour, for I had just then no one else with whom I liked to be better ; and knowing she has so enormous an appetite for flattery, that when no gentleman is near to compliment her erudition, she will condescend to receive a civil thing or two from a woman, I plied her with such skill, that she forgot all my former misdemeanors, and we parted the best friends imaginable. Somebody says, it is our own vanity that makes the vanity of others so intolerable ; and, *en vérité*, I believe there is

wisdom in the remark. In a *tête-à-tête* I did not find her so disgusting, and after all, though a shocking plagiarist, I must admit there is some ingenuity in being able to apply the learning of others with such propriety, that it passes generally current for our own. At all events, that great gift of nature, an accurate memory, she certainly does possess, and her persevering industry is entitled to so much commendation, that she has my good wishes it may succeed in procuring for her a better reward than the white-eyed speculator in thistledown and sun-flowers. If, however, I know any thing of the *men volk*, as a Somersetshire girl, who once sojourned two weeks with auntie Wyedale, used familiarity to designate the lords of the creation, she *bante* in any fear of having her studies interrupted by them. Well, learning has not impaired my vivacity or injured my beautiful person, nor shall it. I don't aspire to have my pretty little delicate symmetrical ancles and toes inshrouded in blue. I would rather be a Ninon than a Minerva, I assure you. The word Minerva has again reminded me of that *lusus naturæ*, John Berkely, on whom I once wasted so many Euphrosyné smiles, and la-

wished so many, I had almost said, Calypso wiles. I do not, however, feel my ill-success any blot on my escutcheon of pretence to transcendant charms: he would have fallen a victim but for his Mentorian Mamma, for which, once I could have murdered her, or at least taken her from her easy arm chair, and shook her out of her shoes. Yet really, now the mania is over, I am amazed what could ever tempt me to consider him a conquest worth making. He has neither a title nor a large fortune; is neither tall (a *sine qua non* in a man) nor peculiarly graceful; is excessively plain, and never pays compliments. For my part, I think he must have given me love-powder, for he was exactly every thing I had determined, in the sunny season of gay sixteen, not to like. Still, even now, I must confess the horrid insensible wretch has something inexplicably taking about him. I cannot tell what, unless it may be in the originality of his ideas, or the simplicity and enthusiasm of his manners; for his conversation is never what I call very lively, or amusing; but then it is that, you will say in your sanctified tones, of a man of sense, information, and honour. And his voice—ah, there it is—that I admit is his

charm. I have, or we have, found it out. So silver-toned, so clear, so expressive, and his language so plain and unaffected, yet strong, energetic and explanatory of what he means. Well ! I conclude like the old philosophers, all is for the best ! He would have been sadly too good and clever for me, not that I shall choose a man who has not a sufficient portion of sense to discover mine ; for fools are proverbially the most difficult of all beings to manage, and sometimes I should be apt to fear where the husband feels apprehensive of inferiority, he may be inclined to oppose matter to mind. With this eulogium on your future spouse, I must really bring my letter to a conclusion, for I cannot, in spite of my ingenuity, contrive to scribble any thing more. Adieu, therefore, my dearest Philly, and with Lady Wyedale's love, Believe me your ever

“ Fascinating and affectionate,

“ Though unworthy, Sister,

“ ROSALIND LEYCESTER.”

“ P. S.—The postscript of a woman's letter has from time immemorial been esteemed the best part of the production ; and, after a very unusually stupid composition, one naturally looks

for something at its close to indemnify the time lost in its perusal. Here, then, you will not be disappointed. I have opened the seal to say we set off in four days for Brighton; and if you choose to join us, you must leave Elm-grove immediately. The motive of this unexpected haste is, to escape my uncle James, and his four daughters, who have written to say they shall be in town in a week. Francis the First exclaimed, when he mounted his horse after Charles released him from a prison, "Now I am a king again!" and this manœuvre convincing me I have nothing to apprehend from tall cousin James, I cry, "Now I am Lady Wyedale's heir once more!" I hope I need not say, whenever these golden visions are realized, my Philly's generosity to me will not escape my recollection. Knowing your attachment to the Berkelys, I have sounded Lady Wyedale on the subject, and should you prefer remaining at Elm-grove, I do not think she would be displeased. Adieu, dear Philly, once more thy degenerate *sœur*,

"ROSALIND."

For some moments surprise kept Felicia silent. She then turned to Mrs. Berkely, stated

the nature of Rosalind's communication, and proposed leaving the Grove on the ensuing day.

"Do you think Lady Wyedale will be offended if you do not rejoin her?" said Mrs. Berkely, who knew Felicia would have little pleasure in revisiting Brighton, the scene of her former happiness with Evanmore.

Felicia candidly declared, that she had no reason to fear she would; and after a little friendly altercation, it was finally settled, that she should remain at the Grove till Lady Wyedale's return to town.

To Felicia this arrangement was extremely gratifying. She had many reasons for disliking Brighton; and as Rosalind and Lady Wyedale were again on amicable terms, she had little reason to expect that the latter would be very kind to her. She had at length perceived, that her Ladyship derived as much pleasure from playing off one niece against another, as Rosalind experienced while pursuing the same system with her lovers; and though she undoubtedly treated her with less harshness since her dismissal of Evanmore, than she had previously done, she was still so far from evincing for her any thing like attachment, that she

could not avoid rejoicing at their continued separation. Her heart dilating with pleasure, she wrote to mention Mrs. Berkely's wish that she should extend her visit until her return from Brighton; and when her Ladyship's consent, in a few hasty lines written by Rosalind, reached her, she felt as much delight as most young ladies would have experienced on receiving permission to spend a winter in all the fascinations of London; and far greater than was the portion of her sister, when the unexpected visit of Mr. Leycester at length decided Lady Wyedale to leave town.

Rosalind, in fact, in defiance of the strain of affected vivacity that ran through her letter, felt, by no means, elate. Felicia's remarks on Lord Edgermond's conduct had sunk deeper than she chose to avow. Yet, as his Lordship still continued to breathe into her ear every thing but a positive declaration of marriage, she was unwilling to believe he had no serious intention of addressing her. The same obstacle to their wishes indeed remained. Perhaps it was therefore idle to expect him to be more explicit. She was not, however, perfectly satisfied, much as she desired to be so, that he might not without impropriety have

done more than hint at his situation—wish Lady Charlotte Edgermond married with all his soul—execrate the prudent policy of his uncle Lord Wilberton, who had been the cause of his present entanglement—prophesy that he should wear her ladyship's patience out at last, and express his hopes that he should then receive the hand of the loveliest woman in the kingdom. Like herself, his Lordship was again on the wing for Brighton; and after some struggles she determined, if he pursued towards her the same cold policy which had given her so much uneasiness when last there, she would heroically dismiss him from her thoughts.

While such were the speculations and resolutions of the lovely Rosalind, her less fashionable sister entered with pleasure into the rustic employments of her friends.

There is no method so sure to obtain the love of others, as that of evincing a sincere affection for them. Felicia felt she was thus loved, and each day saw her more desirous to deserve their regard. In the absence of their juvenile gardeners, she assisted the Miss Berkelys to keep down the weeds in the shrubbery; and as she contemplated the fine healthy glow,

exercise diffused over the manly face of Mr. Berkely while superintending the labours of his men, or witnessed the respectful affection which their ready smiling attention to his orders announced, she thought him no longer plain. Yet another pang at the difference between his pursuits and those of Evanmore's sometimes darted through her heart.

"But such also may be Evanmore's employments," she thought, "when he shall have seen the fallacy of his present pleasures—the errors that now obscure his virtues."

There was rapture in the bare idea; and the bounding step, the beaming eye, again bespoke internal peace.

Thus lightly had glided away the jocund season of harvest, when Mrs. Berkely received a letter from a distant relative, requesting to see her, and the Miss Berkelys, for a week or fortnight. As her friend felt much indisposed, and from her advanced time of life, could not hope to weather the storm she had so long been buffeting, Mrs. Berkely determined to leave the Grove immediately, with one of her daughters, who, after having spent a few days with her, should return home, and be replaced

by her sister. Felicia saw the motive of this arrangement, thought it was delicately hidden under the plea of Mrs. Berkely's being unwilling to leave her servants without some directress; and regretted that her uncertainty respecting Lady Wyedale's present residence precluded the possibility of instantly rejoining her. To her last letter, Rosalind had never replied, and as in her former she hinted, that their stay at Brighton was very precarious, she knew not where to direct her steps. She was secretly lamenting this unfortunate circumstance, when a servant announced Mrs. Dursley, and two of her daughters.

Mrs. Dursley was an old acquaintance, though not a very near neighbour of the Berkelys, and willing to enliven the little party she was leaving, Mrs. Berkely mentioned the cause of her proposed visit, and requested that the young ladies would spend a day with them in her absence.

"My daughters would be very happy, I am sure, to accept your obliging invitation," said Mrs. Dursley; but would it not be better for Miss Leycester to pass the week you propose being from home with us? I feel almost

assured you would take both the Miss Berkelys, were you not reluctant to leave her at the Grove; and, I assure you, I shall rejoice to receive her under my protection during your absence. I had once the pleasure of slightly knowing your aunt, as I mentioned to you, when I had first the pleasure of seeing you," she continued, turning to Felicia, "and independently of Miss Leycester's own claims to esteem, her affinity to Mrs. Beauclerc must ever render her a welcome guest."

Felicia felt extremely gratified by this polite and agreeable invitation. Of Mrs. Dursley she knew little; for though some morning-calls had passed between her and the Berkelys since her residence at the Grove, they did not appear very intimate: but that little was calculated to impress her with a high opinion of her character. She was the mother of the Dr. Dursley, from whose skill Lady Wyedale anticipated so much advantage; and while she heaved an involuntary sigh, as she recollected that the first mention of the name had produced the first unkind remark which Evanmore had ever addressed to her, she remembered with pleasure that the dialogue that occasioned it was

produced by a sneer at the reputed sanctity of his family. Circumstances had since convinced her, there was no foundation for the rumour of his engagement to Miss Berkely; but nothing had transpired to contradict the assertion that the Dursleys were an eminently pious family; and Felicia instinctively felt her heart warm towards all who agreed with her on religious points, though she was far from disliking or censuring those who did not. Aware of Mrs. Berkely's real motive for leaving Miss Berkely at the Grove, she instantly availed herself of Mrs. Dursley's hospitality; and too ingenuous to insist upon an arrangement, which delicacy alone had impelled her to make, Mrs. Berkely assented to this alteration in her plans with pleasure. Ere they parted, it was settled that Felicia should accompany Mrs. Berkely and her daughters, as far on their way as to a neighbouring village, from whence the distance to Dursley-house would only prove a pleasant walk.

This little variation in her plan rendering it necessary that she should make some further arrangements for the comfort and accommodation of her sons, thus left by themselves,

Mrs. Berkely resolved not to set off until she had taken an early dinner; and busied in preparing for her little excursion, Felicia had no opportunity of speaking of her new friends till they all entered the carriage. She then expressed the high opinion she entertained of them, and felt somewhat surprised, when Mrs. Berkely simply said, in reply to her panegyric, that she believed they were a very orderly, respectable family, and always wished and intended to perform the duties of their station with propriety.

Before the momentary astonishment she felt at this cool encomium wore off, the carriage stopped; and after taking an affectionate leave of her companions, Felicia commenced her walk to Dursley-house.

CHAPTER X.

Souvent on tire plus de fruit de ses fautes que de ses bonnes actions ; les grandes actions enflent le cœur, et inspirent une présomption dangereuse ; les fautes font rentrer un homme en lui-même, et lui rendent la sagesse qu'il avoit perdu dans les bons succès.

Fenelon.

Mrs. DURSLEY's invitation had been given with such apparent sincerity and friendliness, that Felicia, in addition to a former predilection in her favour, felt disposed to consider herself and family with peculiar regard ; and as she pursued her walk to their mansion, became almost inclined to wish that Mrs. Berkeley's praise had been of a warmer character. Something like shame flitted across her mind as this undefined censure indistinctly presented itself to her imagination. "Do I well," she cried, "to be angry with those who approach

so nearly towards the glorious goal of perfection, because they have not yet reached its splendid bourne : when years of labour and self-denial must pass over my head, ere I shall gain that summit of excellence they have already attained ?”

The appearance of Mrs. Dursley and her daughters, who came to meet her, interrupted this self-reproach, and gratified by this delicate attention she felt every previous prepossession in their favour revive. At the tea-table she was introduced to Mr. Dursley and his two youngest sons ; for Dr. Dursley his mother made a professional apology. Mr. Dursley appeared a gentlemanly, good-tempered man ; but of his sons she could form no estimate, as they preserved a profound silence during the repast, and the instant it was ended, left the room.

“ I fear,” said Mrs. Dursley, “ you will find it very dull here, Miss Leycester. We have so many resources within ourselves we never experience *ennui* ; but our friends are sometimes a little weary of its monotony, I am afraid. Those, especially, whose religious sentiments are not in unison with ours, must find its calm

enjoyments insipid; but that I think, on reflection, can't be your case. Mrs. Beauclerc was, I have heard, a most excellent Christian, and I dare say held all public amusements in as much abhorrence as we do."

"My aunt was, indeed; a most exemplary woman," said Felicia, "and we had, in truth, too many sources of happiness at home to be inclined to seek it abroad."

Mrs. Dursley looked scarcely satisfied with this ambiguous reply. "Mrs. Beauclerc, I presume, considered public amusements criminal?" said she, in a tone of deep inquiry.

"The frequent use of them highly so," said Felicia; "but she was disposed rather to consider the abuse of such scenes wrong than—"

"I am astonished," interrupted Mrs. Dursley, "I should have thought on that point all real Christians would be unanimous."

"My aunt did not personally approve of young persons being initiated into such scenes," said Felicia, who now thought it right to state Mrs. Beauclerc's sentiments, "lest they might be misconceived, or taught to expect in them a pleasure which, on trial, they cannot yield; and we never felt the want of them to enliven

our solitude ; but she did not condemn those who occasionally partook of them, because she said the world would never be brought to think alike on all points, and where they agreed in material ones, she thought minor differences ought to be waved."

"Mrs. Beauclerc judged according to the best of her opinion," said Mrs. Dursley, "no doubt, but I must own in this age of laxity and irreligion, I am inclined to think that real Christians are called upon to be decisive. Lukewarmness, and morbid insensibility to spiritual things is the error of the times ; and those who would wish not only to prove an example to others, but be themselves something more than mere professors, should nobly resist the stream of impiety, and struggle, without ceasing, to reform the corruption of human nature."

"They ought," replied Felicia ; "but all are not gifted with equal powers or opportunities ; and let us hope, that they who steadily perform their own duties, and walk humbly with their Maker, will be accepted, though they may not possess those splendid attributes and shining virtues, which are necessary to form the cha-

racter, and mark the conduct of the favoured few, who are destined to the arduous task of stemming the torrent of popular immorality."

Mrs. Dursley joined in this hope, but it was evident she was not quite satisfied with the termination of the argument; for she once or twice observed during the evening, that "we should not follow a multitude to do evil." That it was the duty of all, to expose what they deemed wrong in the practice of others, without a cowardly fear of being laughed at by the worldly and thoughtless; and that Christianity had more to dread from the supineness of its friends, than the hatred of its enemies."

These remarks were so manifestly founded in truth, that Felicia readily assented to them, and ascribing Mrs. Dursley's zeal to that strict piety she had often heard mentioned as peculiar to her, felt her, if possible, rise in her estimation, though she still saw no reason to apprehend that the milder virtues would not meet their reward, because native timidity of character and retiring habits forbad their possessors from openly taking that distinguished station in the religious world, which Mrs. Dursley esteemed essential in all who professed to be

influenced by the principles of the Christian religion.

“Miss Leycester, will it be disagreeable to you to join with us in family prayers?” said Mrs. Dursley, after the sandwich-board had been removed.

“Disagreeable!” repeated Felicia. “Oh, no, I shall rejoice at the opportunity.”

“Our prayers will probably be unlike any to which you have been accustomed.”

“Forms are immaterial to me,” said Felicia. “Agreeing as we do in essentials, they, my dear madam, can make no difference.”

Mrs. Dursley rung the bell, and desired a servant to inform the young gentlemen that she was going to prayers.

“Mr. Dursley,” said she, stepping up to her husband, who was fast asleep in his chair, fatigued with a hard morning’s coursing, “I am going to begin prayers.”

He did not speak. She applied her hand to his shoulder, with a degree of violence, Felicia thought, a little unnecessary.

“We are going to prayers. You are so sleepy always!”

“Prayers! prayers! Oh, very well, my dear,”

said he, rubbing his eyes, "very well. You may begin."

The two Mr. Dursleys now entered; and after the servants were all assembled, Mrs. Dursley repeated some long extempore prayers, in which Felicia joined as well as she could, for they were so different from those to which she had been accustomed, the beautiful manuals of Bishops Wilson, Taylor, and Andrews, that, ere they were finished, she half regretted that those excellent authors seemed to be unknown to her hostess.

On the ensuing day, she awoke at an early hour; and unwilling to be too late for the morning devotions of the family, descended to the drawing-room, where the family usually sat, a little before eight. They had not yet met, and she amused herself by taking a survey of its contents. On the table lay a large Bible, splendidly bound, and scattered about were several religious tracts, which seemed rather to touch upon doctrinal than practical points. A grand piano was open: and the profusion of light expensive trifles that ornamented the chimney-piece, and several inlaid tables, announced that Mrs. Dursley's

religion was not of a cast too gloomy to permit her to enjoy all the elegancies of life. "I should have been sorry to have found her unnecessarily rigid," thought Felicia, as she made the remark; "so many means of gratification would not have been extended to us, if it were criminal to partake of them; and while we neglect not the duty of charity, it is right in the affluent thus to encourage ingenious merit."

The breakfast-bell rang, as she concluded this mental soliloquy, and she instantly went into the breakfast-room. Mrs. Dursley was already making tea.

"Good morning, my dear Miss Leycester! I hope I have not long kept you waiting; but I could not sooner collect the family, for Dr. Dursley came home late last night, and we sat up engaged in conversation with him long after you retired. This must also be my apology for missing morning prayers. We are generally pretty constant; but in a large family it is impossible to achieve it always, and we should not attend too much to the ceremonial of religion."

"Undoubtedly not," replied Felicia, yet her

conscience seemed to whisper, that all domestic arrangements, in one whose piety was of so exalted a cast, ought to be made subservient to the "one thing needful." But she remembered the self-reproach she incurred the evening before by daring to censure Mrs. Berkely, and she suppressed any further reflection on the subject.

Dr. Dursley, now introduced to her for the first time, was a little, genteel, slight, formal-looking man, of such peculiar neatness in his appearance, that an enemy might designate it by the term finical; but his face, though small and delicate in its complexion, was not without expression. What that expression might indicate, Felicia could not well divine, and she was endeavouring to assist her judgment by recalling some of the rules of Lavater, when memory suggested to her fancy the reign of Charles the first; and in his precise physiognomy, reserved deportment, and investigating suspicious eye, she could scarcely think it a want of charity to trace some resemblance to the adherents of Oliver Cromwell and his round headed junto. His brothers were two fine-looking young men, and appeared immersed in

the pursuits of all other young men ; for having shook off the taciturnity of the preceding evening, they discussed, during breakfast, the respective merits of their dogs, horses, and guns ; and detailed many anecdotes illustrative of their skill in driving, coursing, and shooting, to which Mrs. Dursley, at least, listened with all the fondness of maternal affection, till they suddenly rose up, and regardless of the Miss Dursleys' wish that they should join them in a walk, quitted the room, saying they should go to the kennel.

Felicia, who saw a shade of discontent lour on Miss Dursley's brow, instantly regretted that such excellent young men should appear so negligent of those common attentions which contribute so much towards the peace and happiness of the domestic circle. It soon, however, wore off, and after the tea equipage had been removed, the ladies of the family were left at perfect liberty to begin the employments of the day.

Felicia felt some curiosity to know in what manner so peculiarly pious a family disposed of their time, and hoping to reap some benefit from her visit, accompanied them into the draw-

ing-room. Miss Dursley immediately sat down to the piano: Louisa drew towards her a work-table, on which she was painting a group of flowers; and Charlotte, unlocking a splendid satin-wood netting-box, began a silk purse.

“I dare say you are surprised to see us all so industrious!” said Mrs. Dursley, taking up a hearth-rug which she was working in that most minute of stitches, tentstitch; “but I esteem it extremely culpable to be idle, and even in a retired village like this, we always find a plenitude of employment.”

Felicia remembering how much of her own and her aunt's time had been engrossed in visiting their poorer neighbours, and the unremitting endeavours of the Berkelys to relieve the wants of their tenantry and dependents, believed Mrs. Dursley meant to allude to similar occupations, and replied, “No doubt, in so populous a village, you have many claimants on your leisure and charity.”

“Oh! many,” said Mrs. Dursley, “but with a family of my own, you must be well aware it would not be in my power to visit and instruct from house to house, as your aunt probably did: besides which, the poor here are a very

depraved, disorderly, lazy people, and that is, you know, sad encouragement to go amongst them."

"But they need admonition the more," said Felicia, timidly, half afraid she was treading on slippery ground.

"Unquestionably; and while I thought it would be of any benefit to them, I did not relax in my endeavours to save them; but at length finding my efforts futile, I own, I became heartless, and have not latterly been much in their cottages. My daughters occasionally call to leave with them the tracts I receive from the Society monthly; but they are so hardened, they scarcely seem sensible of the obligation; and till they are grateful for spiritual aid, it would, I think, be wrong to afford any other."

Felicia was silent. She had been taught to do her duty without being influenced by the hope of any reward in return. "Be neither offended, nor discouraged, my dearest child," Mrs. Beauclerc often said to her, "should you perceive neither gratitude, nor any rapid improvement in those you try to serve. It is in another world we shall reap the fruit of our

labour ; and till we are its inhabitants, we can never even know how far our exertions may have been crowned with success." Mrs. Dursley's and Mrs. Beauclerc's plans were in total opposition to each other ; for Mrs. Beauclerc, though she esteemed spiritual instruction of far greater importance than temporal aid, generally *prepared* the mind by previous acts of personal kindness to receive as a *further* and *higher* proof of her regard, that which related to the soul ; and as her system had been attended with singular success, Felicia could not assent to the wisdom of Mrs. Dursley's.

" I hope," said Mrs. Dursley, in a voice of alarm, " your aunt did not think it right to encourage idleness and vice ?"

" No," said Felicia, firmly ; " when repeated acts of kindness failed to soften the heart, and unceasing admonitions to awaken the conscience, she then desisted from her fruitless endeavours, that she might not bestow her time and her purse, both of which she considered as sacred deposits, injudiciously or improperly ; but these were rare instances ; and even under such circumstances, when the unhappy wretches were suffering from age, sickness, or

want, she did not deem it right wholly to withhold occasional assistance ; because she said, our Heavenly Father makes His sun to shine both on the just and on the unjust. And, indeed, my dear Madam, if He refused his gifts till we deserved them, should we now be in possession of all those luxuries and enjoyments, that so much enhance the value of every other blessing ?”

“ Undoubtedly, we are all sinful creatures !” said Mrs. Dursley, after a slight pause of seeming embarrassment. “ It is impossible we can sufficiently appreciate the unmerited goodness of the Divine Being ; but because He thinks fit to withhold His judgments till the day of final account, I cannot think we ought to foster the wicked and lazy, if only for example’s-sake.”

“ My aunt did not foster, my dear madam ; she only extended the hand of compassion when they were sick and in misery,” said Felicia, hesitating between a fear of offending her antagonist, and a wish to vindicate her aunt.

“ Nor would I refuse such aid when they absolutely required it,” said Mrs. Dursley, “ and have told them they may send to Dursley-

house to ask charity when they are in need of it; but even then, I deem it proper to make some inquiries, and usually employ my daughters on such occasions."

"Yes," said Miss Louisa Dursley, who seemed the only one inclined to hazard an opinion, "and the poor here are so dirty, that it is horrible to go into their little places. When I escape fleas and a fever, after such visits, I always consider myself very fortunate; but, perhaps, that is not the case in every village."

"Poverty generally wears the same aspect," said Felicia, drily, "though I certainly do not remember ever to have suffered in the way you describe."

"No, I dare say not," said Mrs. Dursley. "The fact is, however, as Louisa states it here. We are unfortunate in living in such a neighbourhood, for it is very shocking to one's feelings to see human nature so degraded. Why, they are so stupid, scarcely any of them can read."

"Then the religious tracts, you said, you were so kind as to distribute, can be of little use to them?" said Felicia.

Mrs. Dursley coloured. "Their children can, no doubt," said she, coldly, "for there is, I

presume you know, a Sunday-school at Woodburn, which the Miss Berkelys attend. I should have instituted one myself, had not this been so near; and I fear Mrs. Berkely might think them intruders, or when the weather is fine, the Miss Dursleys should assist. I, of course, am out of the question, for I think married women have too many duties to discharge at home to leave them leisure for such pursuits."

She stopped, and seemed to expect some answer from Felicia, but again Felicia was silent. Further intercourse with the world had not altered her original belief, that *even married women* might devote a certain portion of their time to the *practical* part of charity; or convinced her, that that leisure which they seemed always able to devote to morning calls and unnecessary visits, might not occasionally be diverted from its usual channel, to that of active benevolence.

The entrance of Dr. Dursley put an end to a dialogue, that did not promise to increase the mutual good opinion of either party, and with a yet stronger sensation of remorse for her half-formed censure of Mrs. Berkely's

coldness, when assenting to the high character of her hostess, she prepared to accompany the Doctor and his sisters in a walk. Their path lay through the village, and Felicia could not help acknowledging, with a sigh, the justice of Miss Louisa's philippics on the dirt and wretchedness that marked the abodes of her unfortunate neighbours. The windows were mostly either broken or stuffed with rags; and whole groups of half-naked children sprawling on the dusty road, betrayed there was no school to shelter their infancy.

"What swarms of children poor people always have!" said Miss Dursley, drawing back with apprehensive dismay from a clamorous little urchin, who, more importunate than his playmates, pursued them to petition for a half-penny to buy bread.

Weary of his entreaties, Felicia threw him a penny. The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you approve of giving money indiscriminately to all who solicit your bounty, Miss Leycester?"

"No," said Felicia, "I think too much pains cannot be taken to ascertain that we bestow our alms on proper objects. In this instance,

I was overcome by the wretched appearance, and persevering solicitations of the little beggar, and the sum was so trifling, I shall not reproach myself with it, should it turn out to have been applied to a different purpose from that I intended."

"Have you known the Berkelys very long?" said he, rather suddenly.

"No," said she, glad to change this topic, "I have not personally had that happiness more than a year; but they have been known to me, by character, since my childhood; for Mrs. Berkely was the friend of my aunt Beauclerc, and intimacy has increased their claims to my attachment and respect. Mr. Berkely, I think I have heard, was a school-fellow of your's. What an excellent exemplary man he is."

"Yes," said the Doctor, "I believe he has a good heart. But I am told he is temporising, like his mother."

"Temporising!" repeated Felicia.

"Yes; it is some years since we were intimate. I speak, therefore, only from report, which says, he is inclined to indulge in all the pleasures of the world."

“And which of its enjoyments do you resign?” thought Felicia, as her eye glanced over his elegantly arranged dress, and her fancy presented the unbounded luxuries that graced his home. “I am then more fortunate than you,” said she, with something like distance, “for I can, from experience, say, neither Mrs. Berkely nor her children are disposed to partake immoderately of any of the gifts of fortune; or, in the plenitude of their blessings, lost to the wants of their suffering fellow-creatures.”

A slight shade passed over his face, but it was gone in a moment, and he said, with an unhesitating voice and firm countenance, “I am really glad to hear it from such high and disinterested authority.”

Felicia thought he laid unnecessary emphasis on the word *disinterested*, and without being able to account for her emotions, felt displeased and dispirited. The rest of the walk passed in almost total silence; and when she found herself in the privacy of her apartment, she had so little leisure to dress for dinner, she had no time to analyze the nature or cause of her feelings. The last bell rung as she finished the duties of the toilet, and when she reached the dining-

room, she found the rest of the family just assembled.

Apparently with a view to atone for the neglect of prayers, Mrs. Dursley's grace was so long, that Mr. Dursley appeared to lose all his patience before it was half concluded; but in defiance of his restless attitudes and eager eye fixed on her lips, she calmly persevered to the end.

"Come, my dear," cried he, before the last sound of her voice had entirely died away, "pray let's have dinner. I've been coursing all morning—you should consider."

"No," replied she, her face swelling with self-approbation, "I shall never consider *such* a circumstance at *such* a time."

"You would though, if you were desperate hungry, like me," said he.

"I hope I should never so far forget my duty," was the reply.

"Miss Leycester," he cried, without appearing to hear this rejoinder, "I will trouble you for some of that calf's-head hash. It is as cold as a stone," said he, casting a melancholy look upon his wife, when she complied with his request.

“It certainly is!” said she, tasting it herself, before she appeared to give any credit to his statement. I believe I must part with my cook. I am very unfortunate in my servants; for though they have advantages with me they can never receive in any other place, I don’t find them sensible of their obligations. This woman lived five years with a particular friend of mine, and brought an amazing character with her; still, in the six months she has been here, she has behaved so ill, I fear I must discharge her, which I shall be concerned to do, on account of my friend, Lady Reynolds, who recommended her.”

“Before you do, I hope you will ascertain that her successor is as clever as you imagine; for, after all, though the hash was cold, she is a very tolerable cook.”

Mrs. Dursley gave him a look she meant should reach his eye only, but it failed in its destination, and was perceived by Felicia, instead of her husband.

There was a something in this short dialogue, united with the conversation of the morning, that imperceptibly lowered Mrs. Dursley in Felicia’s estimation, and without

being able to assign the exact cause of this change in her sentiments, ere she retired to her room, she felt that she should not be sorry when Mrs. Berkely's return to Elmgrove would put a period to her visit.

CHAPTER XI.

“Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

FURTHER intimacy with the inhabitants of Dursley house, did not revive the favourable impression Felicia had conceived of them while a stranger to their habits and sentiments, but from report: nor could she justly be censured for this alteration in her opinions respecting them, for she had been early taught to make her faith an active principle, and to dread, if her benevolent feelings had no object on which to pour themselves, that they might become so dormant as never to awaken at the voice of misery. Her's was in short that “*religion of the heart*,”* which is shown in practice, not pro-

* See Practical Piety, page 11.

fessions ; and she soon perceived, though Mrs. Dursley's faith was unbounded, her practice appeared somewhat deficient. She was perpetually insisting upon the merits of the Atonement, but she did not seem at all sensible that we must fulfil our part of the covenant ere we can hope to derive benefit from it ; or to remember, that self-denial and good works formed any part of our duties here.

She abhorred public amusements, partly on the ground of their being a waste of time and money, yet she had no idea, that the day consumed in music, drawing, and all the little acts of fashionable idleness was mis-spent ; or that her daughters should not study to appear in every costly trifle of fashionable life. She generally read prayers morning and evening, but she would kneel down in the midst of an angry argument, and resume it on rising. She read the Bible, but those passages which related to *alms-giving*, and all the multiplied virtues included under the comprehensive term of *charity*, she perused without seeming to consider with the smallest attention ; for her assistance to her poor neighbours was of the most limited nature, and her petulant replies

to Mr. Dursley and her family, evinced she had no conception, it is more honourable to rule the temper than take a city ; or was aware, that the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, were held by her favourite apostle, St. Paul, in the highest estimation. She affected to rejoice at the prospect of knowledge being communicated to the lower orders of society, but she contributed no personal assistance to the undertaking ; and her pecuniary aid, low as her rank would decently admit, often fell short of that bestowed by many other persons who did not profess to anticipate from it so glorious a result. When called upon, indeed, for a charitable subscription, she generally gave many excellent reasons for either declining her assistance altogether, or contributing a very trifling sum. “ People with families *must* consider their children. She wished well to every benevolent institution, but one should be just before one is generous.”—When, however, she had a dress to purchase, an entertainment to give, or an article of elegant luxury to procure, these prudential reasons gave way. “ She must then do like every body else—It was impossible *always* to oppose the world—Appear-

ances must be preserved to a certain degree by all persons—It could not be expected people should deprive themselves of every comfort of life.”

She frequently lamented the proneness of human nature to sin, and deplored, that the heart was deceitful above all things; yet she could make few allowances for those of her acquaintance, who disagreed with her on trifling points of belief; or forgive the depravity that distinguished the wretched inhabitants of her village, though in them, vice was robbed, in a great measure, of its deformity, by being too frequently the offspring of ignorance. Neither could Felicia avoid thinking, as her penetration unwillingly discovered these blots in the character of her new acquaintance, that the frequent mention she made of the gentility and opulence of her friends and associates, was little indicative of that deep humility which she sometimes professed to be the ruling feeling of her soul. In terms which her young visitor thought almost overstrained, she often declared, that she “considered all persons upon a par with herself—that the doctrines of Christianity placed the prince and the pauper on terms of

equality, and lamented that the pious few were subject to so many slights from the pride of the vain and worldly." Yet scarcely a day passed without some allusion to her high connexions; and many were the histories she revived of her exalted friends, introduced apparently for no other purpose than to prove their intimacy with herself and her family.

The first Sunday Felicia spent at Dursley-house, she was labouring under a severe cold; and fearful of exposing herself, lest she might become seriously indisposed, a misfortune particularly to be dreaded when from home, she begged to be allowed to spend the day in her own apartment. Her reasons for this indulgence were so manifest, it was readily granted, and she consequently remained a stranger to the way in which Mrs. Dursley deemed it right to spend this sacred season of rest and enjoyment. She had now been a member of her household a fortnight, for she became her visitor on the Monday, and with something like curiosity she rose particularly early on the second Sunday she found herself at Dursley-house, that she might not only be enabled to unite with the family in their devotions,

but ascertain how far they agreed on the so-often-disputed ground of its occupations. After performing her own private duties, she descended to the breakfast-room, and when an hour had elapsed, felt a little impatient for the appearance of the family. Not one of its members, however, interrupted her solitude before the breakfast-bell rung, and she then learnt from Mrs. Dursley, that, as they always sent their servants to church, and attended there themselves, they did not deem it necessary to insist on private prayers in the morning.

Felicia bowed, but made no reply. Already she discovered that they materially disagreed; for though fatigue or inadvertence sometimes obliged her to delay her matin orisons till after breakfast on every other, the seventh was with her so solemn, so peculiar a day, she never omitted rising in time to perform those longer devotions which were dedicated to its use: nor could she help thinking this summary mode of clipping off morning prayers, augured little real pleasure in the offices of piety.

The entrance of the different branches of the family soon interrupted these reflections; and after a meal which Mrs. Dursley thought was

conducted with pious decorum, because it passed in almost gloomy silence, she was retiring to her room to dress for church, when one of the young men asked where they were all to go.

“To church, to be sure,” replied his mother. “You know we never omit our duty.”

“But whither will you go—to Mapleton church, or Woodley?” asked he. “At one there is to be a famous preacher, and at the other, there is to be a charity sermon.”

Mrs. Dursley looked perplexed. “We will put it to the vote!” she cried, giving at the same time, Felicia thought, undue weight to one side of the question, by observing, that they might never have another opportunity of hearing the celebrated clergyman, who was to preach at Mapleton.

The young ladies, however, did not take the hint, for they preferred Woodley, assigning at the same time, as a reason, that it was the nearest. Mr. Dursley vowed he cared not a straw which way the contest was decided. The Doctor united with his mother, when she avowed her wish to go to Mapleton; and the two young men, like the Indian Kings, ex-

pressed their determination of joining the strongest side, which they had little doubt would be their mother's. Felicia was now called upon to give her opinion, and after much hesitation, she ranked herself on the side of the young ladies, alleging, her desire to support the charity sermon preponderated over her inclination to hear the preacher. Felicia had long declined giving her weight to either party, for she was aware she could not gratify both, and might probably excite more displeasure by her decision, than she could easily remove: she therefore remained neutral, till, finding her resistance to their united entreaties was beginning to give offence, she fairly declared in favour of Woodley, from a conviction that it would be wrong to neglect such an opportunity of doing good to its much neglected poor.

Mrs. Dursley looked discomposed, and Felicia, glad to escape from this scene of contention, retired to her own apartment.

While calmly employed in perusing one of Bishop Porteus's sermons, which she had brought with her, she was summoned into the drawing-room by a servant, who announced from his mistress, that it was time to set off,

as the roads were extremely bad, owing to some rain, and if they were not there early, the clerk or sexton might probably be so impertinent as to put somebody into their pew.

Felicia hastily put on her spencer, on receiving this information, and joined Mrs. Dursley in the drawing-room. The Doctor was her only companion, and during the half hour that elapsed before the young ladies made their appearance, she incessantly, though indirectly, lamented that the argument had not been decided according to her wishes. "The roads were so intolerable—the stiles so inconvenient—the preacher so lukewarm!"

Felicia bore all these back-handed strokes without the smallest self-reproach, for the share she had had in subjecting her to this evident mortification. She had not voluntarily given her sentiments; but she felt assured her influence had been thrown in the right scale, and secretly pitying the woman who could thus extract pain from the most trivial events of life, remained almost uninterested in her remarks, till the Miss Dursleys at length arrived. Mrs. Dursley's complaints immediately assumed a more serious aspect; and after twenty times

protesting they should be too late, to which her daughters as often replied, that they should be too soon, the whole party suddenly commenced the walk to Woodley.

The Church lay about three quarters of a mile from the house, and as they pursued the path that led to it, various were the opportunities that presented themselves to each party for continuing the subject of the morning's discussion. The Miss Dursleys expressed their hopes that there would be a full church, and a good collection; Mrs. Dursley, her conviction that there would be neither, from the known inability of the minister, and the doubts which many persons entertained, as to whether the money so raised was properly applied. Mrs. Dursley continually desired them to quicken their pace, and the Miss Dursleys as often wondered at her haste, when every body knew it was earlier than they were ever before accustomed to set off. Next followed an appeal to the watches of every individual present, accompanied by the respective praises of the owners, mingled with the less complimentary remarks of those who had reasons for not liking to abide by their decision. This mutual inter

change of civilities was at length terminated by reaching the church ; and on entering the door, it was discovered that both parties had indulged unnecessary apprehensions, for they were neither too soon nor too late. The service immediately began ; and after a plain, but mild and excellent discourse, they all prepared to return home. The preacher had selected his text from the thirteenth chapter of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians ; and Felicia had no doubt the strength of his arguments in favour, not merely of alms-giving, but all the other graces included under the head of charity, would have made her friends extremely ashamed of the petulance they had manifested. How, then, was she astonished to find, that the sermon had so little touched their hearts, or affected their consciences, that they were mutually ready to renew the subject in debate the moment they had the opportunity of beginning it.

Mrs. Dursley opened the attack by remarking, they had had a " feeble, uninteresting, ineffective discourse—a mere moral dissertation on the duty of giving money to the poor, which she esteemed the least part of charity," and finished it by expressing her conviction that

they should have heard a very different discourse had they gone to Mapleton. At a charity sermon the Miss Dursleys thought almsgiving the most important topic to dwell upon, prophesied that there would be a larger collection than usual on such occasions, and avowed their satisfaction at having heard a sermon from which they had derived so much advantage. These contending opinions and contrary feelings had hitherto been delivered with tolerable calmness and fashionable gentility; but Mrs. Dursley now being thoroughly exasperated, the dialogue assumed a more serious aspect, and bid fair to end in a complete quarrel; when Dr. Dursley, whose passions were much more under control than those of his family, secretly ashamed of Felicia's being the witness to such a scene on their return from church, put an end to it by observing, that he must leave them to visit a patient, but hoped he should be able to eat his *Sunday's* dinner with them. A strong emphasis on Sunday recalled his mother's scattered prudence. She did not feel hurt at her own violence on such a day, but that she had forgotten herself so far as to indulge it before a visitor; and, after darting an angry

look at her daughters, who received it with calm, decent, indifferent decorum, she turned to Felicia, and with a faint smile said, "I am afraid we have teased you by this little argument, Miss Leycester. It is impossible the fondest families can always think alike, but we never really disagree. I believe no persons were ever more attached to each other. I don't remember our ever having had a positive quarrel in our lives."

Felicia listened with the utmost disgust to this futile attempt to gloss over the violence and irritability they had betrayed: nor could she help thinking that prudential motives and worldly considerations alone conduced to that domestic tranquillity which Mrs. Dursley complimented so highly. The unaffected attachment, the unpretending piety of the Berkelys, appeared yet more conspicuous when contrasted with the assumed sweetness and ostentatious zeal of their neighbours; and as the parting observations of Mrs. Berkely arose to her memory, she felt that she could now fully and entirely acquit her of either prejudice or want of charity.

As Mr. Dursley nodded by the fire, the young

ladies yawned over a sermon, and their mother perused a controversial pamphlet, with the ardour of one who seemed to think fire and fagot scarcely an adequate punishment for those who disagreed with her in opinion. Felicia cast a glance into the comfortable drawing-room at Elm-grove, and heaved a sigh of almost envy as she saw them sitting by its blazing fire, each cheerfully occupied in perusing some instructive work of practical devotion, or listening to Mr. Berkely, who not unfrequently, after the more solemn duties of the sabbath were over, read aloud the history of some eminent reformer or exemplary Christian, from whose exalted piety and shining example they endeavoured to derive some personal assistance.

When she reviewed the events of the day on her pillow, she felt still less inclined to admire the principles or conduct of her entertainers. Mrs. Dursley made a great parade of having a cold early dinner, that her servants might have the opportunity of going to church, and appeared more surprised than pleased, when she casually mentioned that such was the common custom of the Berkelys. A dark cloud and

dusty roads were deemed sufficient apologies for staying at home in the afternoon; and though Mrs. Dursley read a few extra prayers in the evening, there seemed to be a total want of that life and energy, which she had expected in a family so avowedly under the influence of religious feelings. And she breathed a hearty wish, ere she closed her eyes, that she might not be their guest another week.

She was, however, doomed to disappointment; for the lady to whom Mrs. Berkely's visit of charity was paid, continued extremely ill; and satisfied that Felicia was safely, though she had some doubts as to her being agreeably, situated, Mrs. Berkely acceded to her earnest entreaties that she would remain. Mrs. Berkely also was not unwilling that her young friend should have the opportunity of seeing, that all who make high pretensions to exalted piety, like the proud Pharisees of old, were not entitled to her undoubting confidence—of perceiving the emptiness of that religion, which, consisting in creed only, lays no control on the heart; and allows expressions of charity and good will to become its silver—its gold—and its brass. She knew Mrs. Dursley thoroughly, and she

was not sorry that chance had placed it in her power to perceive that something more than mere professions, rigid adherence to trifling forms, and severe strictures on the laxity of others, is necessary to form the Christian character, and adorn the disciples of Christianity.

Another Sunday, neither sanctified by Mosical strictness nor hallowed by Christian enjoyments, had passed away, and Felicia was beginning to fear it might be the harbinger of another week spent in a wearisome interchange of civilities, with persons whose sentiments were so entirely at variance with her own, when one morning, as she placed herself at the breakfast table, she perceived Mrs. Dursley looked unusually out of temper. Her family, probably, made the same observation, for the meal commenced in almost total silence, and she was secretly contemplating its termination with pleasure, when Mrs. Dursley said, "Pray, my dear don't linger over that cup of coffee so long; really it is quite fatiguing to sit with the tea-things so long before one."

A side-wind attack on her husband was so decisive a proof of her being disposed to indulge a little ill-humour, that he immediately

took the hint, and rising somewhat hastily from his chair, overturned a large glass jug of milk which stood near him. Additionally eager to escape from the impending storm, Mr. Dursley made only two steps in reaching the door, and before a female servant arrived to repair the mischief he had committed, was, happily for himself, out of the reach of his lady's voice.

"Why did you not come before?" exclaimed Mrs. Dursley, in an angry tone, to the young woman as she stooped to wipe the soiled carpet.

"I came the moment I was told, Ma'am," said she, without looking at her exasperated interrogator.

"I don't believe it!" cried Mrs. Dursley. "You are so intolerably idle and full of pretences, I can never rely on what you do say."

"So you have often told me before, Ma'am," was the cool reply, as she calmly pursued her employment.

"Quit my house this instant," Mrs. Dursley replied, real rage usurping that which Felicia had before believed was rather affected than

felt. "Your insolence is so shameful, I would not keep you in my house a moment longer, if I were obliged to do your work myself."

"Very well!" said the girl, rising from her knees, "please to pay me my wages, and the month besides, and I shall not be sorry to leave you, I assure you. I have had harder work and harder usage in the six months I've been with you, than I had in the six years I lived in service afore I came to you."

"Go—go. Do not dare to be any further insolent. I will not give you a character. I should think myself wrong to suffer such a creature to enter any other person's house."

"As to a character," she replied, turning on her a look of firm intimidation, "if you attempt to refuse me that, I'll go before a magistrate. I defy you to say I've ever been dishonest, or lazy, or saucy either, but when you have driven me to it."

This disgraceful contest was terminated by the entrance of Dr. Dursley, to whom his mother immediately communicated what had passed, ascribing, however, for the young woman's insolence, every other cause than that which it appeared to Felicia had provoked it, namely,

her own irritable manner, when she first rebuked her for a delay, which, undoubtedly, was not of long duration, and appeared on her side to have been unpremeditated.

It had often been Felicia's fate to hear violent words between Lady Wyedale and her domestics ; but till she left Leominster she had been a stranger to any thing like a personal altercation between a mistress and a servant : nor had she, during four months residence with the Berkelys, ever been witness to so unpleasant a scene, and she was endeavouring to contrive some method of escaping from the room, when Mrs. Dursley said, " I am quite hurt you should have been subjected to so disagreeable a dialogue, and greatly deplore what has occurred ; for this poor, low, violent creature, was recommended to me by a particular friend, and I shall be quite sorry to have her leave me at a moment's notice ; those things make such a noise in an idle gossiping neighbourhood. I do not, however, lament that she thought proper to take herself off ; for, though I would not have dismissed her, because she was recommended by Lady Reynolds, whom I should be exceedingly grieved to displease, I have great

reason to believe I shall experience no difficulty in meeting with a successor who will suit me much better, in a very clever woman, who once lived with a sister of mine, and is now out of place."

Dr. Dursley's pale complexion was suddenly enlivened by a faint suffusion : without speaking, he looked at Felicia ; she had instinctively raised her face from the carpet, and as their eyes involuntarily met, he saw, in a moment, that the real cause of this degrading scene had not escaped the keenness of her penetration ; though, blinded by self-love and self-*arrogance*, his mother seemingly was unconscious that she had been meanly bringing about, by harshness and insult, a separation which she secretly desired, though she was unwilling to achieve it by fair and honourable methods, from a fear of offending Lady Reynolds.

Felicia deeply blushed as she perceived his investigating countenance fixed on her's, and scarcely knowing what she was doing, she seated herself at the piano. The music to "Two faces under a Hood," at that moment presented itself to her memory ; and almost alarmed lest her very thoughts might be

scanned by the subtle Dr. Dursley, she hastily said, the music to the English Fleet was extremely beautiful.

“Is it? We are not competent to give an opinion,” said Mrs. Dursley, drawing up. “My daughters have never seen a play.”

“But they have seen a piece of self-delusion and cruel injustice, which is more calculated to do them harm, than fifty such exhibitions,” thought Felicia, as her ingenuous soul revolted from the meanness of urging a servant to that step, which only an apprehension of displeasing a titled acquaintance withheld her from personally taking.

A long and unpleasant pause followed. The Doctor had contrived to give his mother reason to wish she had restrained the exuberance of her joy, at this ungenerous advantage over a young woman no longer valuable, because she knew some one who was, she thought, better calculated to suit her; and though she had no idea she could err, so firmly was she assured of her own goodness by incessantly talking of it, and adhering to a few empty forms, she felt excessively provoked that any thing should have happened to lower

her in the estimation of her young acquaintance, whose high connexions rendered her a personage of some importance, and whose gentle manners and propriety of conduct, had imperceptibly gained on her esteem, if not affections.

Such was the situation of the family at Dursley-house, when a note arrived from Mrs. Berkely, stating, that her friend was so much better, she had left her without uneasiness, and requesting to see Felicia that afternoon. Felicia almost uttered an exclamation of joy as she received this long-expected mandate for her return to the Grove; and after sincerely thanking the Dursleys for their hospitality, and taking as cordial a farewell of each member as she possibly could, without hypocrisy, she stepped into the little garden chair, which Mrs. Berkely had sent to convey her to the Grove, with sensations that bore some resemblance to those of a bird on escaping from a cage where it had experienced the kindest treatment, but where it had wanted the society of its feathered friends, and panted for the blessings of liberty.

CHAPTER XII.

“ There is a destiny in this strange world,
Which oft decrees an undeserved doom.”

AS she slowly drove home in the little chair, which Mr. Berkely had ingeniously contrived for the accommodation of his lamented sister, Maria, Felicia could not avoid commenting with great severity on the conduct of the Dursleys, considered as a body, but especially on that of Mrs. Dursley. While perpetually arrogating to themselves a title to superior piety, and inveighing, either by open reproach or silent innuendos against almost all their acquaintance, they fell far, very far, short of that *practical* perfection which distinguished those humble professors who were the objects of their evident contempt. While enjoying every luxury which taste, fashion, or affluence could

procure, they were perpetually assigning limited resources, or prudential considerations, as a reason for not bestowing more on the wants of their fellow-creatures ; and while hour after hour, day after day, was devoted to music, drawing, ornamental needle-work, and morning visits, want of time was the plea advanced for not uniting in those strenuous exertions which the Berkelys were daily making to add to the flock of a Saviour. Their religion, it was evident, did not influence them to restrain their passions ; for though they usually made up their differences in a short time, they gave way, when hurt at any trifling provocation or disagreement, to a degree of violence and petulance equally disgraceful and surprising, while their haughty and unfeeling behaviour to their dependants, manifested little of that meek and humble spirit which is essential to a true believer.

“ These, alas ! are the people who injure the cause of Christianity ! ” thought Felicia, as these facts passed in mental review before her sight. “ It is not those who *scoff* at religion, but those who *degrade* her, that are her bitterest enemies. It is not the laughter of the impious,

but the errors of the high professor, which bring Christianity into discredit." Let me then learn to attach myself yet more to *acts*, and not to *words*— to "*sense*, and not to *sound*," lest my religion prove a meteor to deceive, and my professions become "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

From these reflections, she was startled by hearing her own name pronounced, in the well-known tones of Mr. Berkely's voice, and looking hastily round, she saw him by the side of the little poney.

"I fear I have interrupted some very pleasing meditations," said he, "for I had been soliciting your attention some time before you noticed me."

"Indeed you have not," said she, gaily, "I assure you; though grateful for the hospitality I have received since we parted, I am most happy to return."

He sprung into the low chaise, and taking the reins from his servant, told him he might return by a shorter path, and announce they should soon reach the Grove.

"We are not less happy to receive you again," said he. "Since the death of poor

Maria, we have never been so cheerful, never so usefully employed. You have given life and energy to our pursuits, and I own I have had some indistinct apprehensions that you might forget us ; and —” he hesitated.

“ Impossible !” cried Felicia, warmly. “ You could not think I should ever be tempted to forget you at Dursley-house.”

Mr. Berkely looked earnestly at her, and as he marked the glow of mingled surprise and attachment that mantled on her face, as she contrasted his family and that of the Dursleys together, he felt anxious to reveal the secret that had so long laboured at his heart. But ere he could summon resolution to say he loved her, she changed the conversation ; and half happy at having the important moment delayed, half sorry at having lost the opportunity so long panted for, he communicated that his brother was the accepted lover of a lady in the neighbourhood. “ You have, I doubt not, observed his frequent absences from home ; they were occasioned by his wish to be near her, and our silence on this subject has proceeded from our not being quite assured that the lady’s friends would consent to their union ;

for Andrew has only a younger brother's portion, poor fellow ; and though an ornament to his profession, as we have little family interest, he has few hopes of obtaining any thing very considerable in the church. Since, however, you left us, some arrangements have been mutually entered into, and I believe the marriage will take place in a few months."

What those arrangements were, he did not hint ; but Felicia, knowing the extreme generosity of his disposition, entertained little doubt he had made some considerable personal sacrifice ; and after congratulating him on the approaching event, she casually said, she expected to see Mr. Andrew in high spirits.

" You will not be disappointed," replied he. " Andrew is in almost brilliant spirits. I trust, however, and believe, he will not realize the truth of the common assertion, that the life of a lover is the most blissful period of existence ; for I cannot acquiesce in its wisdom, and I should be sorry for the lady whose future protector differed from me in opinion. The ardour which attends uncertainty and hope must indeed subside ; but will the chastened joys of domestic love be a bad substitute for

the tumultuous feelings of passion? As in life dazzling abilities and splendid qualities do not always secure to the possessors either honour or aggrandizement, so I conceive, that the calm serenity, the undisturbed endearments of conjugal affection, may more conduce to real happiness than the impetuous fervours, the unsatisfied hopes, that generally attend the days of courtship."

Felicia felt extremely pleased by these remarks; and when he led her again to the drawing-room, could not help thinking, as her eye glanced round this, his favourite apartment, again enlivened by the cheering glow of a fire blazing in the antique grate, that she, to whom he gave his valuable affections, would have reason to rejoice at her lot; nor could she, when again clasped in the arms of his mother and sisters, avoid feeling as if she had once more returned to a home endeared by a temporary absence.

"What a striking instance you are, my dearest mother," said Mr. Berkely, eyeing her with fond admiration, as she drew out her knitting the instant she had finished tea, "of the fallacy of the remark, that advanced life affords no display of even active virtue. You

never relax, never indulge the natural propensity of man to be indolent, listless, discontented ; and though you are not now, as formerly, called upon to train us, by firm, steady exertions, to the path of duty, you keep us there by your own perseverance. The example is still set us—the lesson is still taught us—by the unchanging vigor with which you pursue the less arduous occupations of increasing years.”

“Your estimate of me, my dear John, is drawn rather from affection than justice. I find myself continually erring on the very ground where you compliment me ; for time is so valuable, and life so transient, that we can never sufficiently appreciate the inestimable gift—can never be sufficiently anxious, or careful, to spend it as we ought.”

In this modest, unaffected reply, her family saw another proof of that merit she so humbly disclaimed ; and during the month she had spent with the Dursleys, Felicia felt, that she had never received one such lesson of virtue. Mrs. Berkely did not question her as to whether she found her previous sentiments augmented by intimacy, nor did Felicia hint, even

to her, or Miss Berkely, that she had been disappointed; but her pointed silence explained her sentiments; and in the increased delight with which she sought to perform the duties of practical piety and benevolence, Mrs. Berkely saw she had learnt to regard professional piety with more dislike and suspicion.

It was now October; and after writing twice before she obtained any reply, she received a few hurried lines from Rosalind, stating, that they had been in town nearly a fortnight. The letter was shorter than customary, and contained little more than the bare intelligence of their having left Brighton; but a postscript, written in apparently still greater haste, communicated the following important information—"I forgot to tell you, Evanmore is in town also; he left Alverstou about a week or ten days ago, and I believe intends spending the Winter here."

Felicia scarcely breathed while her eye glanced over this passage; and she felt almost displeased at Rosalind's mentioning so lightly and casually, a circumstance which she must know would be to her so replete with interest. Her heart throbbing with blended emotions of

pleasure, surprise, and uneasiness, she sat down to say in reply, that she should be ready to leave the Grove, whenever Lady Wyedale could send the carriage to convey her to Russell-square. When she had despatched this letter, her mind again reverted to the unexpected intelligence she had just received. At first, she felt pain, lest it should be an additional proof that Evanmore could no longer endure a Winter in the country; but this sensation soon gave way to the more pleasing idea, that it might be a sign of his wish to renew their engagement—of his desire to retrieve her good opinion by showing her that, though in the seat of former temptation, he could resist its fascinations. Again her bosom expanded with joy, as she slowly admitted this captivating supposition; and eager to return to town to convince herself of its truth—fearful of being compelled to acknowledge its fallacy, she awaited Lady Wyedale's mandate for her removal from the Grove, with painful anxiety. A fortnight, however, passed, yet no summons arrived. She then became impatient, and a thousand apprehensions took place of the hopes she had so lately indulged. Perhaps Lady Wyedale was

much worse, or Rosalind herself indisposed. It had not escaped her observation, or regret, that her letters, in defiance of her evident wish to veil her secret feelings, had uniformly been distinguished by a strain of dejection, unlike the thoughtless hilarity of her natural style.

To a secret conviction, that Lord Edgermond would never honourably solicit her hand, she had ascribed this great alteration since she left her; and fearful she might be mourning her own imprudence in encouraging such attentions, and his treachery in possessing himself of the affections of one woman, while his vows were plighted to another, she longed yet more, to rejoin her, that she might assuage her uneasiness by the balm of sympathy, or divert it, by her assiduous attentions, from dwelling on her mind; or, perhaps, Rosalind, seeing Evanmore was again immersed in those scenes from which she had wished to withdraw him, might not urge Lady Wyedale to send for her, from a fear that her return would be productive of nothing but increased uneasiness and anxiety. Vain, however, were her conjectures or her hopes. Rosalind continued silent; and at length equally astonished, hurt, and alarmed, she wrote to

Lady Wyedale, to say, her visit to the Berkelys had been so much prolonged, that though their hospitality inclined them to wish it still lengthened, she really felt there was a degree of indelicacy in remaining longer. She therefore entreated her Ladyship would have the goodness to send for her without further delay, or that, if inconvenient to her to spare the carriage, she would, through the medium of Rosalind, or a servant, authorize her to undertake the journey in the Mail.

This letter will certainly bring a speedy answer, thought Felicia; and trying to dismiss the subject from her thoughts, she entered the drawing-room. Mr. Berkely was there alone. He arose on seeing her, and placed her a chair near the fire.

It was a fine, clear morning: the sun shone cheerfully through the almost-naked branches of the trees, and November's varied tints streaked the few remaining leaves that yet lingered on their lofty summits. The windows commanded a view of the village; and though the fragrant bunches of the rose or honeysuckle no longer adorned their white walls, their straw-bound roofs, and thin blue smoke curling among

the trees that sheltered them from the blasts of Winter, possessed many a charm for the eye of taste. Beyond was the church, now more distinctly seen than in Summer; and as it stood on a little eminence above the village, it seemed, to Felicia's fanciful imagination, like a good man standing firm, erect, and glorious, above the grovelling multitude who surrounded him; yet viewing them with pity, and presenting at once an example to guide them to brighter realms, and a hand to assist them in their progress.

"Might I presume to ask the nature of your meditations?" said Berkely, watching the turn of her expressive features, as she gazed on those lovely objects with the fond, lingering attention of one who thinks he is about to be separated from the scene of attraction.

Felicia smiled, and candidly told him the simile she had been drawing. Mr. Berkely again anxiously regarded her, and again wished to solicit her affections; but the diffidence, the timidity of real love, still held him enchained. He believed she had conquered her attachment to Evanmore, but he feared she might not, as

yet, feel sufficient indifference towards him to render the addresses of any other agreeable, and he dreaded to lose the interest he had discernment enough to perceive he was making in her heart as a friend, by precipitately declaring himself a lover. Agitated and perplexed, he, therefore, once more relinquished the intention of avowing his attachment; and unconscious of his viewing her with any warmer feelings than those of friendship, Felicia continued, by her artless attentions, to fan the flame she had excited.

The day after she had despatched her letter was dark and gloomy. The hollow gusts of a chill November wind beat the descending rain in torrents against the dusky windows; and, unable to pursue his usual occupations, Mr. Berkely spent the whole of the day with his family.

“Stir the fire, Mary,” said he to his sister, when a servant took away the tea equipage; “and let us, by increased liveliness and comfort within, bid defiance to the storm that is raging without.”

Miss Berkely complied, and Felicia, taking

her work, tried to pay attention to the book Mr. Berkely was reading aloud for their amusement. Vainly, however, did she endeavour to command her wandering thoughts into subjection, and fix them on the beautiful effusions of the elegant and pious Cowper. They reverted again and again to Rosalind—Evanmore—and Lady Wyedale. Once she thought she heard a distant rumbling-sound like that of a carriage, and her heart beat high, as she fancied Lady Wyedale might perhaps send for her without writing. But no; it was only the Autumn wind hoarsely rushing through the leafless trees, and the sighing sullen ripple of the turbid lake swelling against its banks.

“William is late to-night,” said Mr. Berkely, at length putting down the volume, and examining his watch. “It is nearly nine o’clock; and I always feel impatient for his return from the Post-office on Tuesday evenings, because he brings me the Farmer’s Journal.”

Felicia raised her head from her work with a sentiment of envy on hearing this complaint. She had noticed with sympathy his solicitude

for the return of a messenger, in whose motions she also took so deep an interest; but how different were, it appeared, their feelings. Tranquil and happy, nothing disturbed the even tenor of his thoughts—his wishes were confined to the perusal of a newspaper—while she, the sport of various emotions, was anticipating with feverish anxiety a letter that might confirm her worst apprehensions, or be the precursor of renewed intercourse with one she felt she loved with unabated fervency.

While such were her reflections, the servant arrived, and Felicia eagerly asked if he were the bearer of a letter for her. She was answered in the negative; and Mrs. Berkely, who had perceived her restlessness through the day, with a view to divert her uneasiness, requested, while Mr. Berkely perused the *Farmer's Journal* which he had opened, she would read aloud the daily paper that accompanied it. Felicia instantly complied; and willing to conceal her mortification, had read with tolerable spirit several paragraphs, when her eye caught one which, in a moment, absorbed every faculty of her soul; and, buried in a wild chaos of con-

tending passions, she remained, her glazed eyes still bent on the words which had thus harrowed up her feelings—her trembling hands still grasping the paper—till Mrs. Berkely, surprised at her silence, looked up from her work, and saw her a stiff and livid monument of death.

“Dear Miss Leycester! Felicia!” she cried, “tell me what is the matter? You terrify me! Speak, I conjure you!”

But Felicia remained silent.—An icy bolt had shot through her heart; and, paralyzed by agony, she was incapable of soothing the sufferings of any other.

Mr. Berkely sprung forwards; and scarcely knowing what he did, snatched the paper from her fainting grasp. Her eye still pursued the fatal cause of her anguish; and directed by her almost phrenzied gaze, he instantly saw,

“Yesterday morning, at St. James’s Church,
“Henry Evanmore, Esq., of Alverston, Dorset,
“to Rosalind, youngest daughter of the late
“Major Leycester, and niece of Lady Wyedale.”

The paper fell from his nerveless fingers; and, awakened by the exclamation of astonishment

that burst from his lips, to something like consciousness of those around her, Felicia dropped on the sofa, covered her face with her hands to hide her anguish, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

END OF VOL. II.



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